

THE DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY

By the same author

THINGS TO COME
TO THE UNKNOWN GOD
THE LIFE OF JESUS
THE EVOLUTION OF AN INTELLECTUAL
GOD
DISCOVERIES
SON OF WOMAN
THE NECESSITY OF COMMUNISM
THE NECESSITY OF PACIFISM
WILLIAM BLAKE
REMINISCENCES OF D. H. LAWRENCE
ASPECTS OF LITERATURE
BETWEEN TWO WORLDS
SHAKESPEARE
HEAVEN—AND EARTH

THE DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY

by

JOHN
MIDDLETON MURRY



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INTRODUCTORY

DURING the war of 1914-18 the democracies were urged to make the world safe for democracy. The democracies won the war. Instead of making the world safe for democracy they tried to make it safe for themselves — a different matter. As part of the process they insisted that they must have a democratic Germany to make peace with and when they had got it, they proceeded first to starve it, then to make it declare it bore the sole guilt of the war, and then to compel it to pay the whole cost of the war. In consequence, one part of the world — namely, Germany — was made very unsafe for democracy. As a subsidiary part of the process of making the world safe for themselves, they created a new democratic state, Czechoslovakia, which, twenty years later, they discovered they were under no moral obligation to defend.

I am not alone in believing that the crisis of September-October 1938 marks the beginning of a new phase in the history of Europe, of England, and of modern democracy. The consequence of the Munich agreement has been a deep and growing malaise. This malaise is not primarily due to the apprehension of bigger crises still to come. That is serious enough to give us pause. But our malaise is deeper and — if the word be allowed — more spiritual. We English have begun to wonder what we stand for, and whether we stand for anything. That is a new condition of soul

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for us to be in. Probably for the past four hundred years we have felt, with varying degrees of distinctness, that we were secure of a leading role in world-history. We stood for 'freedom'. At different times we have meant different things by that emotive word. But the champion of Freedom, undoubtedly, was the part we felt ourselves called to sustain in the morality-play of history.

Suddenly, we have become doubtful about it. There was something about our conduct towards Czechoslovakia which could not be made to square with this tradition. Apart from the fact that that gallant and (as we were told) exemplary little republic was largely our own creation and appeared to be morally (if not legally) entitled to much more resolute support than we gave it, we were suddenly discovered to be upholders of the principle of 'national self-determination' in a sense entirely new, and certainly never contemplated by the American President who gave it fresh currency, towards the end of the last war. If the principle as invoked by Herr Hitler, and allowed by Mr. Chamberlain, is valid, then our refusal to permit the union of Austria with Germany after the war was criminal. Perhaps it was. But we cut a sorry figure in discovering that a principle, when backed by an armed Germany, is sacred, but when invoked by Germany disarmed, is nugatory. It would be more decent, and more wholesome, in such circumstances to drop the word principle entirely — in this connection, anyhow.

If there was a principle at stake — other than the 'sotte et vague principe des nationalités', as the Duc

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de Broglie called it fifty years ago — it would appear to be that we were morally committed to the support of a democratic republic which we had helped to found, and which we had consistently represented to ourselves as exemplary (by European standards) in its treatment of a large and difficult national minority. No doubt the Czech treatment of the German minority was not perfect, but it was admittedly better than the treatment of any national minority in the succession states of Europe. Moreover, the Czech government offered to go to the limit of concession to the Sudeten Germans — a limit indeed that was but doubtfully compatible with the national integrity of Czecho-Slovakia.

Nevertheless, we — or Mr. Chamberlain on our behalf — decided that it was not worth going to war to support Czecho-Slovakia. We may leave aside the disingenuous and discreditable suggestion that we were really the benefactors of Czecho-Slovakia, because by compelling it to capitulate we saved it from the horrors of invasion. The Czechs were unanimous in their desire to defend themselves by arms against the force of arms. And unless we are really prepared to have our allies abandon us in the next war on the ground that they are doing their best to save us from the horrors of war, we had better try to forget that non-pacifist Englishmen ever put forward this altruistic argument. Our position was simple and straightforward in point of fact, though not in point of morality: we refused to plunge into the unknown horrors of modern war in order to defend the integrity

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of Czecho-Slovakia. In the opinion of the British government, and almost certainly of the majority of the British people, the issue at stake was not important enough to justify our risking war.

That, we say, is a simple and straightforward position in point of fact; and would have been far better if we had declared it simply and straightforwardly. It was simple and straightforward on the negative side: on this issue we would not fight. But what of the positive? What *was* the issue? It is almost impossible to define. Regarded from one angle—the angle that was, or should have been, most natural to us—it was whether we were prepared to defend a state which we had helped to create, an avowedly composite state, but one which had as clean a justification, historical and national, for separate existence as any other of the succession-states of the Hapsburg empire, and one which, compared to its neighbours, was far more liberal than they: it was a democratic and liberal republic and it was the only one left in Central Europe. One thing seems certain: namely, that at any previous point in our history we should have considered the defence of Czecho-Slovakia a national duty. Regarded from another angle—the issue was whether we were prepared to fight to prevent the incorporation of the Sudetens in the German Reich. But both these views are unduly simplified.

From what ought to have been the British point of view, the question whether or not the republic of Czecho-Slovakia had a right to independent existence

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did not arise at all. By all existing standards of politics the creation of Czechoslovakia was more than justifiable, it was praiseworthy. It was not, in any proper sense of the phrase, an artificial creation, as was disreputably alleged. The one question at issue was whether Germany should be allowed to incorporate the Sudetens into the Reich by the threat of force. To that, if political morality were alone concerned, there was only one just reply: namely, that Germany must not be allowed to do this.

But to say 'No' involved the risk of war, and that risk we refused to take. That is clear; but our behaviour was highly ambiguous. It would have been far better when it came to the extremity of crisis to announce our position plainly, and to have said that, although we regarded the action of Germany as arbitrary and unjust, we could not take the risk of plunging ourselves and Europe into the horrors of international war in order to defend the just cause of a country which might, in view of the present power and policy of her great neighbour, prove to be incapable of existing in its present form. It does not appear that Czechoslovakia would have fared one atom the worse if we had done this. As it was, by endeavouring to cover our own action with a show of morality, we have covered Germany's with a show of legality. But it is easy to criticize after the event. Mr. Chamberlain had to improvise a policy — in a matter of unique political significance — on the spur of the moment. His policy was bound to be weak, because of the weakness of the national sentiment behind him. There is

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no reasonable doubt that in September-October 1938 the majority of the British people were opposed to going to war 'for Czecho-Slovakia'. But that does not mean that they would have been opposed to it if they had been properly prepared during the early months of the year. They were not warned that a crisis was preparing. They ought to have been warned.

This, we think, was Mr. Chamberlain's great failure. He did not attempt to educate the British public into the gravity of the situation that was preparing in Central Europe. He was not aware of it himself. Indeed, it has been his deliberate intention not to be aware of it; for he is a professional optimist with regard to the Fascist totalitarian states. He believed, and perhaps he still believes, that they are as eager as he is to settle the affairs of Europe by peaceful negotiation. The maxim which he proclaims is that the system of government in the totalitarian states is entirely their own affair. That is an abstract statement; and a highly equivocal one. If it means simply that we have neither the right nor the desire to interfere with the systems of government in Germany, or Italy, or Russia, it is a truism. But, as Mr. Chamberlain uses it, the maxim is stretched, vaguely indeed but significantly, far beyond this. Apparently it is argued that, because we 'recognize' the German government, therefore we are bound to trust it, and bound moreover to assume that it is animated by the desire to preserve the peace of Europe. Such an assumption seems to us unworthy of a serious statesman, for it amounts in fact to treating the profound difference

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between the German system of government and our own as negligible for the purposes of statesmanship. That assumption sheds more light on Mr. Chamberlain's mentality than it is likely to bring peace to Europe.

For the totalitarian systems of government represent a positive challenge to the democracies. The democracies, on their side, represent a criticism of totalitarianism. But between a criticism and a challenge there is a vast difference. And above all, the totalitarianisms repudiate the very idea of international obligations, just as they recognize no validity in the persons of their own citizens, but regard them simply and solely as component parts of the omnipotent state, so they recognize no moral validity in other national societies. They do not regard them as moral 'persons' with rights which must be respected. There is for them no such thing as a society of nations. No doubt the society of nations is a rudimentary thing. But it is the breath of life to the democracies, or rather it is the environment which they need in order to exist. The democracies aspire to the creation of a reign of international law, as to the condition of their own existence. That they have been ignorant of this demand of their own nature is one of the great tragedies of modern times: for the ignorance and vindictiveness by which, at the moment of their supreme power, in 1918, they were led to treat Germany as outside the pale of law, has been the most potent factor in creating that powerful determination to repudiate the whole idea of an international

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society governed by law, which inspires the leader of modern Germany.

That is the situation which confronts us to-day—the determination of two of the most powerful nations in Europe to repudiate the principle of an international society. This repudiation is not theoretical; it is a fact. Over that portion of Europe which is comprised in Germany and Italy, and so far as their coercive power effectively extends, the rudimentary society of nations is destroyed. And they intend to go on with the work of creating moral and political chaos, wherein no law but the law of force shall be recognized. At some point evidently, the creation of chaos will come when the deep desire of man for ordered liberty will begin to prevail again. But there can be no doubt that to-day the forces of chaos are in the ascendant, or that they will be for years to come.

The cause of our profound and growing malaise is, I think, our failure to recognize the forces of chaos for what they are. If we were to recognize them for what they are, we should be able to consider the difficult problem of how they are to be resisted. Instead of that, our responsible statesman appears to insist on regarding the forces of chaos as entirely respectable. He harbours the illusion that by personal contact with the dictators, a ‘gentleman’s understanding’ may be reached. For all I know, Herr Hitler may be a charming person, as charming, in his own particular style, as Mr. Chamberlain is in his. But it is nothing to the purpose. Herr Hitler’s morality is evil: justice and honour have no place in it.

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And it seems to me that by consorting personally with statesmen who make no secret of their intention to break agreements whenever it suits them Mr. Chamberlain is doing an ill service to the peace of the world. It was surely humiliating to insist on paying a personal visit to Signor Mussolini at a moment when his repudiation of non-intervention with regard to Spain was as brutal as it was barefaced. To seek out the occasion to talk with such a man on friendly terms is to become an accomplice in his crimes. Rogues and swindlers, once detected, are not received in polite society. They are turned out of clubs. But Mr. Chamberlain, acting as the representative of Great Britain, seems to prefer their company to any other.

That would be all very well if Mr. Chamberlain undertook his missions in the capacity of a Christian saint, for whom there is nothing common or unclean. But Mr. Chamberlain's remarkable indifference to ethical defects derives from no such exalted source; it is much rather the moral indifference of the bagman. But even the bagman is supposed to be interested in whether his shady customers are going to pay their accounts. Nor is he afraid, when he sells to someone in the moral category of Signor Mussolini, to demand cash down. At this point Mr. Chamberlain seems to be visited by Christian scruples, and to feel it would be unkind to make such a request. It would show that he did not trust Signor Mussolini. And that would never do. So when commercial morality commands that there must be no more dealings with the Duce except on a cash basis, Mr. Chamberlain has recourse

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to the Sermon on the Mount; and when the Duce disappoints all Christian expectation, Mr. Chamberlain turns again to his commercial axiom that morals have nothing to do with business. It is a queer pattern of statesmanship; and I cannot but think it a degenerate one. It is completely confusing to the moral sense of the nation.

The moral sense of a nation in matters of politics is always inchoate and rudimentary; quickly weary of well-doing and only too eager to relax into quiescence. It is the task of the statesman to give it a lead, to elicit the unformed thought from its dumb cradle. When the democratic statesman fails to give a moral lead to his countrymen in time of crisis, he fails it completely. Ever since the war, our democratic statesmen have failed us in Britain. Mr. Lloyd George failed us in 1918-19, and since then the process has been continuous. In Mr. Chamberlain democratic statesmanship has fairly run to seed. British democracy, under his leadership, has no idea what it stands for, or whether it stands for anything at all.

We had better try to find out, before it is too late. I should not in normal circumstances, have dreamed of offering myself as a proper person to attempt such an inquiry. But the circumstances are not normal. Perhaps they never will be again. At any rate, I know by experience that these are times when it is impossible to prevent one's thoughts from returning again and again to the deepest questions of political morality. I am, alas, only a tyro in these realms; but to importunate questions to which one can get no satisfying

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answer from authority, one is compelled to try to find the answer oneself. In this book I try to answer the questions: What, in theory and in fact, is modern democracy? What is democratic freedom? Is it valuable? And if so, can it be retained? And how can it be retained? Has the 'defence of democracy' a valuable meaning? And if it has, how can I, as an individual, help in the defence?

These questions, and many others that are implicated in them, I have tried to answer to the best of my ability. I am nothing more than an average Englishman who has been compelled to dig to discover his own foundations. It is an untidy job, at best. But I think I have found them. Whether I can build on them is another matter.

J. MIDDLETON MURRY

February 20th, 1939

PS. The German seizure of Czecho-Slovakia took place after this book was written. Since the book is concerned with principles, no attempt has been made to bring Chaps. XIV and XV 'up to date'.

THE DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY

CHAPTER I

THE CHALLENGE TO
DEMOCRACY

BOTH theoretically and historically the crucial challenge to democracy in our time has been offered by Communism. No doubt it is true that in practice at this moment the most dangerous opponents of democracy are Italian Fascism and German National Socialism. But the opportunity for both these systems of government to arise and sweep away democracy in their native countries was given by the intransigence of a Communist movement. In both Italy and Germany the democratic system was weak; in Italy it was corrupt, as well, while in Germany it had to bear the odium of having signed the iniquitous Treaty of Versailles. In Italy the Communist movement used the power of its industrial organization to paralyse the economic functioning of the country, without making any effort to assume the responsibility of political control; in Germany, in order to discredit the Weimar Republic, the Communists unscrupulously combined with the anti-democratic parties of the extreme Right. We need not enter into the details of this past and painful history. The fact is that Communist movements in Italy and Germany, by repudiating all responsibility towards democracy, opened the

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gates to the enemy, who was determined to destroy democracy.

Nevertheless, although we may admit as a fact of history the guilt of Communism, as the prime agent in the destruction of European democracy, it may be felt that it is no longer pertinent to regard Communism as offering the main challenge to democracy. The enemies of democracy to-day are National Socialism and Fascism, while Communism has learned by bitter experience. Not only is contemporary Communism prepared 'to defend democracy' in theory; but in republican Spain it demonstrated by steadiness and sacrifice its readiness to do so in act. That, by and large, may well be true. Communism is now acutely aware of its own fatal blunders in the past, and we might fairly say — if repentance had meaning in communist psychology — that Communism is repentant for the evil it has done. But here precisely is the rub. Repentance is more than an act; it is also a condition of mind and soul. In so far as its mind and soul are concerned, Communism does not repent of its offences towards democracy. It admits merely that it made mistakes of tactics. So far as its dogma and theory are involved, democracy is as much a sham as it always was, and communist theory is as assiduously at work as ever in discrediting democracy. It cannot do otherwise, simply because there is no room for democracy in communist theory. In order to defend democracy with his heart and mind and soul, the Communist must change his theory.

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Communist theory is a serious theory of society. Fascist theory, National Socialist theory, is not a serious theory of society. A gangster with a gun does not become a responsible statesman because he is able to terrorize society into obedience; neither are Fascism nor National Socialism serious because they 'work'. They are gangster systems of social organization, and the fact that the majority of human beings are inclined to respect successful brutality, and at least a minority are ready to worship it, does not make them serious theories of social organization. Both these systems alike are based on a complete contempt for the mass of men; their basic axiom is that the only power that men will obey is force, and the only organization of which they are capable is organization at the point of a gun. No serious theory of society can be constructed on such a basis, and the logical end of any organization of society on such a basis is war after war of extermination until one victorious gang rules a world of brutes. Such an idea of society — if idea it can be called — contains no criticism of democracy. They do not meet on the same level. The racial 'theory' of National Socialism is merely a fantastic justification for the unlimited gangsterdom of Germany; it provides the excuse for treating other peoples as sub-human. It is important not to be deluded into the notion that Fascism or National Socialism has a *theory* of society which has to be countered. The gunman cannot be

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met by argument. And Hitler and Mussolini are essentially gunmen on the international scale.

That they are worshipped is nothing new. Millions of movie-fans all over the United States worshipped the various Public Enemies from Al Capone onwards. Successful brutality always fascinates people who live on the sensational level, and to whom a day without a thrill is an empty day. And let us be under no illusion. The number of such people is being increased by thousands every day in Great Britain. The movies, the radio, the cheap Press, the football pools, the racing news, the dog-tracks incessantly create them. Thus modern technique is the enemy of democracy, because its insistent tendency is towards diminishing the scope for individual and responsible choice, which is the training-ground of the responsible person, while its increasing centralization of control offers unprecedented opportunities for the seizure of power. That is to say, modern techniques confront democracy with a problem of the utmost urgency, which democracy is making strangely little effort to solve. Their economic and psychological drift is definitely inimical to democracy, as democracy is at present understood and practised. If democracy as it exists to-day is what democracy really is, then I believe its days are numbered. It is a degenerate system that does not create democratic *citizens*. Its members are increasingly democratic citizens only in name, but in fact prepared to be conditioned units in a totalitarian system.

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Thus it is true that, on a different level, Fascism and National Socialism *are* serious theories of society, after all. They are pragmatic criticisms of modern democracy. The modern dictators declare, quite frankly, that the majority of citizens of a modern society are incapable of the responsible freedom with which the democratic system credits and entrusts them. They follow the lead of the shallow politician who panders to their immediate interest, and have not the intellectual capacity to discern nor the moral determination to pursue the interests of the community as a whole. In consequence, the political and economic life of the democratic country is paralysed, or at best works with but a fraction of its potential vigour. From this angle Fascism and National Socialism are a protest against the lethargy and cowardice of the democracies, whose members have not the imagination 'to tender the whole', to use Cromwell's beautiful phrase. Fascism and National Socialism supply the missing unity by making the state omnipotent and placing the control of it in the hands of a single man. That is perfectly legitimate. A nation has the will to live. If the democratic system does not permit the expression of the will to live, it is inevitable that it should be discarded. The evil of Fascism and National Socialism lies first, in the methods by which they overthrow democracy — by a systematic propaganda of lies

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and the deliberate exercise of brutality and terrorism; and, second, in the ideals for which they seek support. Successful brutality, at home and abroad, by the unrestrained use of all the instruments of power which modern scientific technique supplies, is exhibited to the people as the only aim worthy of a great nation. They speak of strength, and they mean, and show that they mean, brutality.

And, alas, they know their audience. For the mass man of to-day, apparently, strength is brutality. The conviction that it is force controlled by morality turns out to be very far from universal. The fearful weakness of capitalist democracy is grimly revealed. The majority of its members have no moral conviction. They do in fact worship 'the bitch-goddess Success'. They have no scruple in their business; of what effective strength is their legalized unscrupulousness against the unscrupulous illegality of the Fascists? The Fascists at least while they are in a minority, take their lives in their hands. The average product of capitalist democracy is not a brave man. Even the streak of heroism in the gunman is beyond his range. The Fascist has some moral advantage, even on the positive side.

On the negative side, he has all the immoral advantage. Some of his opponents are men of principle. They have moral or religious scruples, and they are baffled by the problem of defeating an enemy who has none. They cannot adopt the systematic propaganda of lies; they cannot refuse to the gunman the protection of the democratic freedoms that

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he intends to destroy. The equivocal nature of democratic freedom is manifest: equivocal simply because, within limits, it is a real freedom — for the political society to choose between good and evil — and every effort forcibly to restrain the political society from choosing evil involves a restraint of its freedom to choose the good. From such an effort the honourable democrat shrinks as from a violation of the principle of democracy. ‘Great is truth and it will prevail’ he says to himself in reply to the propaganda of lies; and in reply to appeals that the government should suppress the Fascist movement while there is time, he says: ‘Give a thief rope enough and he is sure to hang himself.’ The foundation of the attitude is a kind of semi-religious faith in the triumph of decency which is hard to abandon, because the alternatives are frightening. One is to accept the fascist cynicism, its contempt for humanity both individually and in the mass — that is intolerable: it involves a self-degradation. Another is to accept the responsibility of authoritarian government in a spirit of Christian paternalism, such as is depicted in Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor. That is much superior to Fascism, though it is what Fascism sometimes pretends to be (for example, in Nationalist Spain): but it involves the final abandonment of democracy. While the third is to accept with open eyes the possibility that the democratic faith will fail in the short run, yet to believe that it somehow is better to be beaten by the forces of evil than to abandon the principle of democratic freedom. But at that point

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faith in democracy has changed, or developed, into a rare type of Christian faith.

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Probably, the main cause of our present malaise is that the democratic mind is wavering, unaware of the nature of its own hesitation between the discredited but not yet abandoned optimism of what is generally meant by 'faith in democracy', and the far profounder and definitely religious faith in Christian freedom — the deep conviction that man must be free, even to choose evil. The first cannot be justified. Neither our own democracy nor that of France, which exulted in the punitive peace imposed upon Germany, is such that a just man can have faith in it. Nor was German democracy or Italian democracy any better: but rather worse. Democracy is not sure to triumph under democracy. We have learned that by experience. And one of the chief reasons is that the freedom of democracy, which has been so imperfectly realized, is in the main the freedom of individuals to make a profit out of others. At best the pursuit of wealth is an ignoble social dynamic; but when it is permitted to extrude every other it is pernicious to society. Yet this is what must happen in the long run. Profit-making is the condition of survival for every enterprise. That means, in effect, that the average appetite, the passive inclination, is always being encouraged at the cost of the finer and more educated desire. The vulgarity of the mass is only superficially

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relieved by the false refinement of the few. The life of integrity, wherein a man's work and his leisure are of a piece, is all but impossible to lead in the last phases of a competitive and profit-making society. The nooks and crannies of concrete freedom narrow down to mere interstices. The man who does not want to make a profit, or to have profit made out of him, but merely to live a life of responsible freedom finds himself a precarious survival.

This, it may be said, is capitalism, not democracy. But, alas, we know of no democracy that is not capitalist. It was capitalism which brought modern democracy into being, and capitalism has had the nurture and education of democracy. It is not to be wondered at that it is a sickly and backward child, unaware of its own potentialities, unused to responsibility, seeking rather the opportunity to escape from the burden of freedom, rather than to shoulder it. The scales are indeed heavily weighted against democracy by capitalism. Its inertias are encouraged and its creativeness is penalized by the profit-making ethos, its eagerness dulled by the dismal realization which sooner or later seeps into the ardent and generous soul that in capitalist democracy 'everything is worth what it will fetch', and nothing more. Can we be surprised that youth rebels against it, and dreams of revolutionary heroism? Or that when one revolutionary party fails it, it turns to the other? It is a fact of history that in Germany a considerable body of Fascists and Communists were interchangeable: they passed from one allegiance to the other and back again.

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The practical problem, if the growth of Fascism is to be checked, is to dissociate democracy from capitalism — to dissociate them in theory, and separate them in fact. It is not easy. Indeed, it may be said that the effort has been made and has failed: Marxist Social Democracy, which claimed to attempt precisely this separation without violence, is a thing of the past in the country of its origin, while in other countries the democratic Socialist movement is losing ground. And it is assuredly true that in Great Britain the democratic Socialist movement is in a condition of moral paralysis. It has shown itself lacking in imaginative vision and in moral courage. It has preached ideals without being prepared to pay the price of achieving them, as notoriously in the matter of the League of Nations. In its conception of the international society it revealed itself as infected by the characteristic moral disease of modern democracy: the decadent belief that citizens have rights but not duties. Just as the new-built international democracy of the League foundered on this feeble illusionism, so will the national democracy, unless it can achieve an entirely new condition of self-awareness.

National democracy depends, in the last resort, on international democracy. We refused to pay the price of international democracy, either in initial generosity towards our heroic enemies, whom we were called to receive as free and equal members of a commonwealth

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of nations, or in subsequent sacrifice, when we would not defend the members of the international society from unprovoked aggression. I am not pretending that either of those decisions from which we shrank was easy to take; my grievance is that the significance of the decisions was never put before the country by its responsible leaders. Probably they did not understand their significance themselves. Probably they never meant anything at all when they declared that the Great War was being waged to make the world safe for democracy. It was merely words. But nevertheless it is true that the existence of national democracy does depend upon the existence of international democracy.

Now that the international democracy has been destroyed, we begin to realize the nature of the threat to national democracy. To defend democracy to-day is an infinitely harder task than it might have been, if the sacrifices of the Great War had not been made in vain. The thought that we can defend democracy by arming ourselves to the teeth is madness. Unless we are vigilant, democracy will merely perish in the process. These are not the kind of sacrifices that a democracy is primarily required to make. They are, if they are necessary at all, only secondary. What is primarily required of a democracy is that it should understand its own nature and the laws of its own existence; or, if this be impossible for democracy as a whole, that the number of its members should steadily increase who understand what it means to be the citizen of a democratic society.

THE THEORY OF THE
PROLETARIAT

IF we wish seriously to examine our ‘faith’ in democracy, it is communist theory that we must employ for the *advocatus diaboli*. Fascism and National Socialism indeed reveal the practical weakness of democracy by overthrowing and destroying it. They accept the negative criticism of democracy which Communism offers, and jeer at Communism’s constructive faith. They exploit the situation which is created by the corrosion of the ‘faith’ in democracy by the radical communist criticism. That is not, we repeat, to put all the blame for our troubles upon Communism. The apathy of ‘democrats’ is not caused by Communism. Communism bears no responsibility for that: that is due to the original sin of individualism — the lack of a social sense, the inertia of the social imagination. The sin of Communism is that it corrodes faith in democracy among those who might be its zealous and selfless defenders, and by turning the best blood of democracy against itself makes democracy as a system sluggish and unworkable.

It is not so simple a matter as it might seem to expound the communist criticism of democracy. Violent communist criticism of democracy belongs to the period subsequent to the Russian Revolution

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when Marxist theory in regard to democracy took a sinister and fatal turn. Up till then, Marxist theory, like Marx himself, had tended to take democracy for granted. Indeed, the official title of the great German Marxist party, which was the envy of Marxist Socialists throughout the world, was the Social-Democratic party. Since Socialism in Germany was wholly Marxist, the split between the Social Democrats and the Communists was a split in Marxism itself. The German Social-Democrats pinned their faith in democracy — though that is rather too fervid an expression — while the German Communists were disloyal to it. They flirted with the idea of an anti-democratic coup for social revolution. Thus, we may fairly say that Marxism, in its traditional German form, was somewhat lethargically loyal to democracy, while in its Marx-Leninist form, it was definitely anti-democratic. But of both it is true to say that neither valued democracy for its own sake. The Social-Democrats believed that democracy was the right way to the socialist revolution, the Communists did not. For both democracy was merely a means. For the Social-Democrats it was a satisfactory means — which would take them automatically to the goal of the socialist commonwealth — for the Communists, repeating the slogans of Moscow, democracy was merely a subtle means by which the working class was cheated by the capitalist.

We need not therefore distinguish, at this stage of our inquiry, between Social Democracy and Communism. Both are, and claim to be, derived from Marxist

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theory. And it is in the original theory of Marx that this peculiar attitude of detachment towards democracy has its origination. The value of democracy for Marx is purely instrumental; it has no intrinsic value. Perhaps it conveys his attitude more precisely to say that democracy has no religious value for him. Whereas the genuine democrat can speak of faith in democracy, and mean by it something not generically different from religious faith, the object of faith for Marx is the proletariat.

To understand the Marxist attitude to democracy we must begin at the beginning of Marxism. And to begin at the beginning as Marx himself peremptorily declared, is to begin with religion. ‘The critique of religion’, he wrote, ‘is the pre-condition of all critiques’¹ — under which title he comprehended all such theories as his own. Marxism is a critique of history and a critique of society. A critique of religion — that is, a critical and philosophical explanation of religion — was thus the pre-condition of Marxism itself. And it was quite natural that the *Theses on Feuerbach* — the eleven pregnant axioms in which Marx first formulated his ‘revolution in thought’ — should have had their origin in Marx’s dissatisfaction with the critique of Christianity contained in Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity*.

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Feuerbach’s once famous book, which marked a stage in the emancipation of the disciples of Hegel

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from their master, was written to prove that Christian theology is a projected human psychology. That contention is all very well so far as it goes, said Marx in effect, but it unconsciously assumes that the human being whose psychology is projected into Christian theology, is an essence, eternal and unchanging. This eternal, unchanging human essence is a fiction, said Marx. The human essence in reality is 'the ensemble of social relations'. That startling and enigmatic statement will be more carefully considered at a later point. For the moment it suffices to observe that this was the crucial proposition in Marx's intellectual revolution, and that it is a radical proposition concerning the nature of man which involves nothing less than the dissolution of man into society. Marx indeed, maintained the truly revolutionary position that man was, in the strict philosophic sense of the word, *essentially* a social phenomenon. That is to say, society was the reality, the individual, the appearance. Moreover, the dynamic and dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis which Hegel had ascribed to 'the absolute spirit', was in fact operative in the life of this social substance of humanity. This concrete historical process was the reality of man; of it 'the absolute spirit' of Hegel was a mere reflection.

One might describe the process of Marx's mind, as recorded in the *Theses on Feuerbach* as a sort of conversion to a completely secular religion. Whereas Feuerbach, by reason of his idealistic bias, assumed as the source of religion an abstract and eternal 'human essence' which was in fact a supernatural conception,

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or at least a Platonic idea, Marx believed that he had really put an end even to this 'self-alienation'.

Religion is the consciousness and feeling of himself in Man who has either not yet entered into possession of himself or has lost himself again. But Man is not an abstract essence squatting above the world. Man is the world of Man, — State, Society. This State, this Society produce religion, — a topsy-turvy world-consciousness, because it is a topsy-turvy world.²

That makes plain one aspect of the distinction between Marx and Feuerbach. But the Marxian mode of finally dissipating the religious illusion has other peculiarities. In a mysterious way it leaves the emancipated man committed to the task of setting right the world, whose topsy-turviness necessitated the religious illusion. Moreover, there is a curious relation between Marxism and mysticism. 'All the mysteries', he says in the 8th Thesis, 'which drive theory to mysticism, find their rational solution in human action and in the understanding of this action.' That is to say, Marxism is a kind of materialistic mysticism which culminates not in ecstasy but in action.³ In the new era, inaugurated by Marx, human action (of course understood as the action of social Man; the man who is 'the world of man') will be consciously acknowledged as the solvent of the contradictions which cause the contemplative mind to resort to mysticism. Contemplative thinking, is, in fact, an illusion, peculiar to the individualized consciousness of a particular historical form of society.

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Thus it is — and this is central to Marx's position — only at a particular moment in the history of society that this complete and dynamic absorption of the religious and idealistic, the 'realm of essences', — into the concrete and historical, — the 'realm of existences', — is possible. This entire secularization of religion, by a dispensation which a religious mind would call providential, takes places at the moment when it becomes possible to rid human existence of those hitherto inescapable imperfections which made supernatural religion necessary to the mind of social man.

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We may postpone the effort to enter further into this strange social monism of Marx. It is not easy to grasp directly, for it does involve an intellectual revolution. It is most naturally approached on the historical level; and we may pass on to Marx's attitude to religion as an historical phenomenon. Since his attitude really was historical he was not wholly unsympathetic to Christianity in the past. Christianity as experience and belief he saw as rooted in the hope of the poor and oppressed for a better life: men and women believed in the Kingdom of God, as a condition into which they would enter after death, because without that belief their lives did not make sense. It was their assertion of a meaning in their life: the injustice of this world *must* eventually be redeemed by justice.

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Religion is the sob of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of conditions utterly unspiritual. It is the laudanum of the poor.⁴

There truly rendered, and in its true context, is the notorious phrase: 'Religion is the opium of the people.' It has been curiously distorted by Marxists and anti-Marxists, from its original accent and intention. In its context it is a phrase not without tenderness, or understanding, or pity.

But now that the technique of machine-production had arrived, there was no longer any need for the disinherited of the earth to look beyond this life for a life of material happiness, or material comfort. The aspiration which had found expression in the belief in the Christian promise could now be effectively turned towards securing a better life on earth, because a better life for all men was now not merely possible but actually required by the development of the new productive forces themselves. Moreover — such was the mystery of the actual — the very process which brought into being the concrete means of production by which men's desire for material security could be satisfied, brought also into being a new class of disinherited men and women who were prepared to risk everything to overthrow the unjust organization of society which alone prevented them from satisfying this desire.⁵

This new class was the proletariat, which by definition 'had nothing but its chains to lose'. It had no property, it had no security, it was used worse than a slave, worse than a beast of burden. The owners

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of the slave, the owners of the beast of burden, took responsibility for its life in their own naked self-interest. They fed, housed, and rested it; they kept it alive and fit for work. But the capitalist had no such responsibility for the proletarian. Economically, his attitude towards the proletarian was not different from his attitude towards the horse or the slave: it was simply to get the most work out of the instrument of production at the minimum cost. But whereas he had to pay, cash down, for the horse or the slave, he merely hired the proletarian. More of his kind could always be had for the asking, provided the capitalist was prepared to pay the wage. That indeed was roughly regulated by the necessities of sheer subsistence, while the work lasted; but when the work was over, so was the capitalist's responsibility. It was a system of systematized irresponsibility of man for his fellow-man.

So that, by a providence which others might call divine but which was for Marx simply immanent in the process of history, at the very same moment that the material conditions of a new and fuller life for the poor had been created, there had simultaneously and by the same historical necessity occurred an annihilation of the last vestiges of social reality in the Christian ethic: the last pretence of any real responsibility of man for his fellow-man had vanished from society. The structure of society was now avowedly based on a concrete repudiation of any such responsibility: indeed that repudiation *was* the nexus of the new economic society of Capitalism.

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It was not, in fact, quite so perfect and logical a pattern of humanity. Hovering in the background of this inhuman economic society was the outline of a crude, unformed and primitive thing which has since developed into that aspect of the State which subsequent Marxist thinking has so singularly ignored — because it was practically non-existent in England when Marx drew his picture, and was completely non-existent in Russia when Lenin drew his conclusions. This may be called ‘the social State’: it was represented in England, in the days of Marx’s picture, by the organized inhumanity of Mr. Bumble’s work-house, and poor-relief at starvation level. The English ‘social State’ of the 1840’s compelled the exact minimum of human responsibility that had to be taken if the decaying corpses of the destitute were not to fester in the streets.

The outcome of this situation in England was, as Marx prophesied, a revolution: but it was a characteristically English revolution, in that it was political, and it was gradual. The proletariat gradually conquered the democratic franchise. That was not, of course, the social revolution Marx hoped for, but it was (he said) the first necessary step towards it. This advance was tenaciously resisted, and was gradual because in England Parliament really was sovereign. In conquering the franchise, the proletariat was really conquering an essential part of sovereignty: of real political power. It used that political power, in proportion as it acquired it, largely to compel an increase in the beneficent activities of ‘the social State’. As

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'the social State' became more effective and beneficent, so steadily the revolutionary potentiality of the proletariat 'which had nothing but its chains to lose' began to diminish. It began to have more to lose than its chains. It was decreasingly under the compulsion of primitive life-instinct to move to revolutionary action. The original Marxian proletariat had to be revolutionary to avoid physical extinction. That is not true of the English working class to-day: therefore the proletariat does not exist, in the original and dynamic Marxist sense.'

CHAPTER III

PROTESTANTISM AND THE
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MARXISM, in its original and dynamic form (in which the salvation of society is achieved by the destruction of bourgeois society by the instinctively revolutionary proletariat) could fairly be described as the creative antithesis of a Christianity that had finally been emptied of practical meaning within the framework of the new social relations. The doctrine arose, as we have seen, at the moment when the last vestiges of Christian morality were vanishing from the economic structure of society. By Christian morality is not meant the ideal Christian ethic of human brotherhood, which has never been realized at all in society at large, but the practical Christian morality of 'Servants, be in subjection unto your masters'. Even the christianized master-servant relation — a relation which supposes some real responsibility of the master for the servant — had gradually been destroyed.

This is not the place to attempt to describe in detail the slow disintegration of the feudal village-community or the slow concomitant process by which landed property liberated itself from the human obligations to which it had been bound.¹ The capitalist system was flourishing at the expense of human lives long

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before its great expansion into industrial manufacture. 'I contend', wrote Thorold Rogers, 'that from 1563 to 1824 a conspiracy, concocted by the law and carried out by parties interested in its success, was entered into, to cheat the English workman of his wages, to tie him to the soil, to deprive him of hope, and to degrade him into irremediable poverty. For more than two centuries and a half, the English law and those who administered the law, were engaged in grinding the English workman down to the lowest pittance, in stamping out every expression or act which indicated any organized discontent, and in multiplying penalties upon him when he thought of his natural rights.'² It is the agricultural labourer of whom he is primarily speaking. More modern investigators do not challenge Thorold Rogers's verdict. Indeed, one has only to read of the childhood of John Clare, the son of one among millions of English peasants towards the end of the eighteenth century, to realize that their condition was not very much better than that of the French peasants who rebelled so mightily and so bloodily in France.

But whereas the French villein, by revolution, established his claim to land sufficient to make him independent, and became a peasant proprietor; the English peasant saw the independence he had half-retained ruthlessly taken from him by a half-century of Enclosure Acts passed hugger-mugger by a parliament of landlords. In England, the poor man and his beast were driven off the common, which meant off the land. He could either become a day-labourer at a

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starvation wage, or drift helplessly into the manufacturing town. It was no wonder that agglomeration of our agricultural labourers in the noisome slums of the industrial cities, where they were again ruthlessly exploited by the ground-landlord in addition to the capitalist master, came to them, in the main, as a merciful release. The increase in their wages seems trifling to us, but it was vital to them, and their congregation in cities meant for them the possibility of combination. Industrial capitalism, it must never be forgotten, was in fact the beginning of the emancipation of the working class. Incredible though it sounds, it was a better thing for the workman, even at its most hideous, than the ruthless and unrelieved oppression of the peasant that had been carried on by the capitalist landed proprietor and his ally the city-merchant for two centuries before. It was not the new capitalist master of industry who invented the conception of property without human obligation, as the champions of 'our old nobility' are fond of asserting. The old nobility had grown rich by it long before.

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The change was that the congregation of workmen into the slums of industrialism aroused in them the faint stirrings of a consciousness of their solidarity. The slum of the manufacturing town had this pregnant difference: that it was a slum in which the inhabitants were crowded together in thousands in their homes,

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as they were crowded in hundreds at their machines. The manufacturing town was a concentrated slum; but the village-homes of England during the latter part of the eighteenth century were one vast scattered slum, concealed from the great houses by high walls and aesthetic ‘improvements’ — but a slum whose inhabitants were segregated from one another by law. It was almost impossible under the law of settlement for the agricultural labourer to move from one parish to another.

When we say, therefore, that the last vestiges of Christian morality had vanished from the economic structure of society at the advent of the proletariat, we are not suggesting that the workmen of the manufacturing town were worse treated than the country labourers from whom they were drawn. The change was, on the one hand, that the workmen of the towns were now in a position to do something, if only to put fear into the hearts of their oppressors; and on the other hand, that the parish system, which was the grim survival, as it were in sardonic caricature, of the old responsibility of property to the village community, broke down under the huge transfer of population.

Precisely at this moment English evangelical Christianity was active in a movement for ‘the abolition of slavery’ in the West Indies: which sounds beautiful and truly Christian. What it meant in reality was the abolition of a crude and tyrannical but nevertheless real relation of responsibility towards the slave in favour of a relation of no responsibility at all. The fervour of evangelical Christianity was devoted to

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turning negro slaves into negro proletarians. That was the conscious religious counterpart of the unconscious activity of capitalism, in finally dehumanizing, depersonalizing and de-Christianizing social relations. That this is not seriously to distort the objective significance — as distinct from the subjective content — of the movement for ‘the abolition of slavery’ is evident if we consider the leading part that Wilberforce played in the enactment of the Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800, which did more to degrade the condition of the English working class than any other single event of the time. The same evangelical fervour which accomplished the abolition of negro slavery in the West Indies was applied to dragooning the English proletarian into accepting his lot as God’s providence.³

Christian piety, then, except in the proletarian form of radical nonconformity, was devoted to the service of the destructive demonry of capitalism. That was manifestly the moment for Marx’s prophetic insight. He saw that the creative demonry of capitalism, perfected by machine-industry and the factory-system, was producing a new class of men which had the power and was impelled by the necessity to destroy the system. This new industrial proletariat did not suffer any worse than the previously existing agricultural proletariat from which it was recruited; its new revolutionary power derived from its being gathered together in one place, and organized for the new methods of collective production. The concentration of the industrial populations, which was demanded

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by the new productive processes, made possible, and indeed inevitable, its political association.

This new class of men was thrust clean out of society, excluded from the scope of all human social relations, treated in fact as so much inanimate but self-reproductive 'labour-power'. This new class of men, Marx prophesied, would destroy because it must destroy capitalist society. A capitalist industrial society must create that class of men in order to function, and that class of men must destroy that form of society in order to exist. We have seen that the prophecy was realized, in a sense; at least, sufficiently realized to change the situation quite radically. We shall be concerned in greater detail with the social and political revolution which ensued upon this challenge to capitalist society by the proletariat one hundred years ago. But for the moment we would emphasize that the historical process we have been considering is eminently a process of salvation, in a truly religious (though not the evangelical) meaning of the word.

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That is to say, Marx's secularization of religion is profoundly different from such a secularization of Christianity as that of Feuerbach. That was based upon what Marx called a 'contemplative materialism' — a point of view possible only to the hypothetical 'individual' of bourgeois society. Rather than a

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secularization of religion in this sense Marxism is a religious interpretation of the historical. The process of history, with a completeness hitherto undreamed of, is penetrated by a religious significance which makes of it a divine drama. But it is a divine drama in a new order or new dimension. And perhaps the least inadequate description of Marx's philosophical revolution is that he attempted to absorb the supernatural into the natural, and by so doing to add a dimension to history. Thus the religious drama of the individual is transformed into the religious drama of Man-in-Society. The specifically Christian dispensation is at end, and the part played by the crucified Jesus in the old dispensation is now taken by the suffering, despised and rejected proletariat. As Christ was the redeemer of pagan humanity, opening to it the whole era of the individual person, so the proletariat is the redeemer of individualized humanity opening to it the new era of socialized humanity. The moment of change arrives when Christianity has reached a nadir of unreality. That conjunction is necessary because the existence of the suffering proletariat is the concrete evidence of the dissolution of Christianity. Christ is crucified anew as the proletariat: and his resurrection is in this world.

A certain type of fugitive and unbreathed religion will, no doubt, recoil from the notion that such a vision of history is religious. Nevertheless, it must be insisted that it is the product of a tremendous power of religious imagination. Such a view would not be possible at all save to a deeply religious genius. Marx

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sees and feels society as a single, almost a cosmic, Man — struggling through suffering towards universal regeneration. Society, not the individual, is the living reality for Marx. And though that may become a very dangerous way of looking upon society, if it remains self-sufficient and is not subordinated, in its turn, by an immediate relation between the individual and a transcendent good, it is nevertheless a necessary way of regarding society in our contemporary technical civilization. Only those who have seen the Marxist vision can make any relevant criticism of Marxism. The living unity of God and society was as vivid to Marx as the vision of a Hebrew prophet. Indeed, he was a Hebrew prophet; and not one of the least.

Furthermore, it is to be remarked that this crucial historical moment of the transformation (in Marx's vision) of a supernatural and otherworldly Christianity into a religion of this world, wherein the power of salvation was, as it were, incarnate in the proletariat, was in fact the moment when the new industrial masses abandoned their historical allegiance to Christianity. Christianity ceased to be the religion of the industrial proletariat. It is the moment, in England, when the elder Mr. Weller protested vehemently against the provision of red flannel waistcoats for the little negroes who did not need them, and the utter neglect of the squalor and suffering at home. The new missionary fervour of English Christianity was not wholly escapism, but very much of it was. Piety turned aside from the misery at its door, and simple-minded generosity like that of Dickens was revolted

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by the religious hypocrisy. But, in truth, the problem was too vast for contemporary religion. The misery of the proletariat was indeed the necessary condition of the wealth-creation of industrial capitalism, with which the Christian churches were deeply involved.

It was also the moment when in England a new movement away from the individualistic tradition of protestant Christianity took birth. The Tractarian movement towards a reassertion of the catholic tradition of Anglican Christianity can be understood in this perspective as a partial attempt to break the Church away from its identification with capitalist society. It was, indeed, very narrow, and its social consciousness was rudimentary: nevertheless, it was a partial rebirth of Christianity. Its revolutionary side is most clearly seen in Hurrell Froude's insistence that the prevailing notion that clergymen should be 'gentlemen' was a blasphemy.⁴ Froude's position involved a dissociation of the Church of England from bourgeois society which, although never achieved, was to remain characteristic of the ideals of the Oxford movement. From it was to develop a movement of Christian Socialism.

Besides this movement, and probably more powerful than it, there was the Christian influence upon the English working-class movement exerted by the newer forms of Nonconformity, in particular by the Methodists and Primitive Methodists. These, unlike the older dissenting movements of the seventeenth century, which were now largely identified with the new commercial middle class, were anti-bourgeois

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movements in the sense that they recruited the main body of their adherents from the working classes. Whatever their theological shortcomings from the standpoint of a catholic Christianity, they carried on the positive and créative work of the earlier Non-conformity: they rehabilitated, and revalidated the individual, and so prepared the way for the claim to political equality. The fact that their ministers were drawn from the ranks, though it involved that breach with the tradition of culture which Matthew Arnold deplored, nevertheless gave to their religious organization a spirit of independence which naturally sought political expression.

Such religious influences as these have served to distinguish, and in some degree to segregate, the Socialist movement of the working class in England from parallel movements on the Continent: so that English Labour has been but a half-hearted participant in the various Internationals. Their secularism and anti-clericalism have been either unintelligible or uncongenial. But it has to be remembered that this peculiar characteristic of the English proletariat is largely an effect of the same causes which made England a pioneer country in the development of capitalist industry, and prior to that a pioneer also in bourgeois political revolution. Unfortunately, we cannot deduce from this any assurance that we are still in the forefront of political evolution. Coming history will reveal whether the pronounced Christian element in British socialism has roots which drive deeper than a long period of relative privilege and prosperity.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASSING OF THE PROLETARIAT

WHAT did Marx mean by ‘the destruction of capitalist society’ which he prophesied that the proletariat would accomplish?

The answer to this question is not quite simple: because there is more than one answer, each corresponding to a different element, or aspect, of the complex thing which capitalism was, even in Marx’s youthful days. If capitalism was regarded as a purely economic system, then destroying capitalist society meant the destruction of that property-right by which the working man was forbidden his creative access to the instruments of production on any save the owner’s terms. If capitalism was regarded as a system of human relations, then destroying capitalist society meant the destruction of the institution of property without human obligations. These two answers do not conflict with one another: the former corresponds to capitalism as a relation of production, the other to capitalism as a social or human relation. And capitalism was both. I say ‘was’; because this capitalism, of which Marx, by his insight, saw the industrial proletariat to be the destined destroyer, no longer exists. That is not to say that capitalism has been destroyed; but that there are plenty of stages

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between being rampantly and monstrously alive and being stone dead. ‘We have scotched the snake, not killed it’, says Macbeth. And it is of primary importance to realize that the capitalism of Marx’s day has been scotched.

First, capitalism as a relation of production has been scotched. That property-right by which the proletarian was forbidden creative access to the instruments of production on any save the master’s terms has been, not destroyed, but so circumscribed as to be essentially changed. By the repeal of repressive laws, by industrial organization, by the development of trades unionism, the proletarian has partly gained the power of refusing the master the creative use of his instruments of production except on a compromise between the master’s terms and his own. Second, capitalism as a human relation has been scotched. The devilish institution of property-right without human obligation has also been not indeed destroyed but so circumscribed as to be essentially changed. And by these two changes the proletariat has ceased to be a proletariat.

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On the nature of this second aspect of the vital change we need to dwell a little. But before doing so, an answer must be given to the question: ‘How can a proletariat cease to be a proletariat?’ Since the failure to understand the possibility of this change is at

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the root of much of the scholastic irrelevance of contemporary Marxism, it is important to have the answer clear. First, we must rid our minds of the superstition that the proletariat — in the specific Marxist sense — is that ill-defined section of contemporary humanity which we call the working class. The proletariat of the Marxian vision is a class of men in a definite situation, with definite attributes, and above all a definite tendency to act in a certain way. It is a class of men and women towards which society accepts no human obligation whatever. It is, also, a class of men in a particular kind of society — a society which is effectively a combination of property-owners, to whom political power belongs roughly in proportion to their property. The proletariat is the class, in such a society, which has no property. To have no property in a society in which political power is vested in the owners of property, and property itself is immune from all human obligation, is to be a proletarian. To belong to the working class in the subsequent society in which we now exist, or the previous feudal society, is not to be a proletarian at all. The vague ascription of the name 'proletariat' in society to-day to the relatively poor, or to the manual labourers, is the cause of much confusion.

But what does it matter if Marxists give the name 'proletariat' to a class of men to whom the name does not belong? What's in a name? The answer is that everything — the whole dynamic of the original Marxist vision — is in this name. The proletariat of Marx is a class with a definite historical mission to

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fulfil — a mission which, by reason of its being in precisely that situation in precisely that society, it is compelled to fulfil. Considered politically, the proletariat is an association of propertyless men in a society in which political power is vested in property alone, and property has been emancipated from all human obligation; considered economically, the proletariat is a conglomeration of men who have only their labour-power to sell in a society in which the instruments necessary to production are privately owned. Propertyless workers existed in plenty before the industrial 'proletariat' came into existence, but under the semi-feudal Tudor absolutism political power was not vested in property. And again, the proletariat is distinguished from the working class of 1650-1750 by its necessary physical conglomeration, due to machine-production, which offers the opportunity of political association.

In order to save itself from sheer physical destruction the proletariat of Marx is compelled to destroy the capitalist society of Marx. Its primitive biological life-instinct drives it on inexorably to destroy that particular form of society, so soon as it has the power to do so — a power which it gains by economic and political association. Once it is grasped that this is the nature of a proletariat, it becomes obvious that if you bestow the name of proletariat on a different class of men in a different society in the pious hope that this different class will behave in the same fashion that the original proletariat would have done, you are comforting yourself with an illusion. If Socialists

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cannot live without illusion, they had better choose another; for, if they persist in this particular one, they will finally destroy whatever chance Socialism yet possesses of leading the way to a society of greater social justice.

We have said that destroying capitalism — in its second aspect as an inhuman relation between human beings — consisted in destroying the devilish institution of property without human obligation. From this angle the insight of Marx was that a society in which political power was vested in property completely devoid of human obligation must destroy itself; and the appointed instrument of its self-destruction was created when such a society reached its logical perfection in the form of industrial capitalism, for then it was compelled to create a class of men, without either property or political power, who by their agglomeration and ordered association in producing the livelihood of society possessed the potentiality of power.

There is not much doubt that Marx's prophecy that capitalist society would destroy itself would have been fulfilled long ago, if capitalist society had persisted in the form in which Marx knew it. Even at the cost of repetition, let us be clear about what was to be destroyed: the institution of property completely emancipated from human obligations. It is important to understand the prophecy of Marx under this aspect, because it makes it easier to understand what has happened since, both to capitalist society and to Marxism.

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What has happened since to capitalist society is twofold. First, gradually and reluctantly, an increasing degree of human obligation has been enforced upon property: not direct personal obligation above and below, of the kind which was attached to property in feudal society, because that is impossible in capitalist society, which is a nexus of indirect human relations, but indirect human obligation by a great increase in the taxation of property, of which a considerable part has been applied, under political pressure from the working class, to the social services. Compared to what would be possible if there were not the present monstrous diversion of the national wealth to the purposes of war, the proportion is no doubt derisory; but since the working class itself still feels that national defence is a social necessity, the disproportion is not wholly amazing.

Second — the political manifestation of one and the same indivisible process — political power was gradually and reluctantly made independent of property. The property-qualification for the parliamentary franchise was abolished by slow degrees. Marxists have talked, much and indiscreetly, of the humbug of political democracy; but the fact remains that in England, during the nineteenth century, in a process which culminated in the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords, political power was gradually taken away from property as such and vested in the individual as such. We may be disappointed with what the enfranchised proletariat has done with his political power; but we must blame him, as much as

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we blame capitalist society, for what he has failed to do. And, if we do not choose to be deliberately blind to the facts, we must admit that he has done a good deal. It is mainly he who has imposed, or reimposed, a large measure of human obligation on property.¹

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That is to say, the society, concerning which Marx made his prophecy, has changed, and changed in a fundamental way. The prophecy of Marx was really that property which had emancipated itself of all human obligation would destroy itself; because property is ultimately created, conferred and guaranteed by the work of society (that is, the workers, of all kinds and classes in society), and property which denies society, denies itself. That prophecy has been accomplished. Property has avoided self-destruction by reluctantly accepting some human obligation, and completely resigning its claim to the exclusive possession of political power. That means that the self-generated dynamic on which the Marxist prophecy was based has disappeared. A more forcible way of putting the point is that the proletariat has ceased to exist; and so has capitalist society.

Current Marxism would regard these assertions as little short of blasphemous; but that does not affect the truth which they contain. Marxism too often has for its chief ingredient a superstitious belief that a prophecy concerning one kind of society is valid

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concerning a quite different kind of society. Once the proletariat has entered bourgeois society, as it did in this country, when the parliamentary vote was granted to every adult individual and the Lords' veto was abolished, there ceased to be a proletariat, in the original Marxist sense, namely, a class compelled by primal life-necessity to make a complete social revolution. If any class of men was now to be the instrument of social revolution, it had to be created on a new level, and by different means.

Furthermore, the meaning of social revolution has changed essentially — because the political revolution which was half of it had actually occurred. What remained was to make men's economic status accord with their political status. The unconscious revolutionary class was a thing of the past. A quite new revolutionary class had now to be consciously created; for there was no longer a class which by mere obedience to primitive life-instinct was compelled to destroy capitalist society. After this absorption of the proletariat into capitalist society — which ceased to be capitalist society by virtue of that absorption — the resulting post-capitalist society could be destroyed only by a conscious and responsible will to destroy it.

What was the chance of this conscious and responsible will developing? We repeat: the new society was not a primitive capitalist society. It was a new society into which the proletariat had been absorbed. How could a conscious and responsible will to destroy such a society develop? What was the iniquity of such a society? Was it not, judged by the standard of current

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morality, a just society? Its basis was that political power had been taken away from property and vested in the individual human being. On what grounds, in virtue of what morality, could a man consciously will to destroy such a society? In it the aggregate of individual human beings possessed the power of shaping it if they willed to do so, to accord with their own heart's desire. They could, if they so willed, make a revolutionary change in the property-right. The fact that they did not will to shape society in accord with the heart's desire of you, or me, or a few thousand Socialists — was that to be the justification of a will to destroy this society? The idea is surely fantastic — morally perverse, and realistically illusory. How could they destroy such a society against the will of the vast majority of the individual human beings who composed it? Yet on this morally perverse and realistically illusory idea, the extremer forms of Socialism in England have nourished themselves for twenty years.

They nourished themselves on the superstition that Marx had prophesied that this society, which was no longer a capitalist society, was bound to destroy itself, and that the appointed agent of this inevitable self-destruction was the proletariat, which had ceased to exist. This society was precisely a society in which the proletariat had ceased to exist: that was the definition of this society in Marx's categories. And because the proletariat had ceased to exist in this post-capitalist society, it had ceased to be a society which deserved destruction — in Marx's sense: for a society that de-

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serves destruction in the sense of Marx is a society that is, by powers internally and inevitably self-generated, compelled to destroy itself.

This is not to say that our existing society — which may be called post-capitalist society — does not ‘deserve destruction’ in some sense of that phrase. On the contrary, I for one believe that it is a society that is doomed to destroy itself, unless it undergoes a radical change, but not because it is a capitalist society in the primitive Marxist sense. It is not. Nor is it doomed to destroy itself by the Marxist means; which is the revolution of the proletariat.

CHAPTER V

THE REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA

IT is plain that the efficacy of the primitive Marxist categories is exhausted. Indeed they appeared to be so irrelevant to the actual development of this country that they were never seriously adopted. That was, we think, a great misfortune, for Marxism is a profound doctrine of human history; and if it could have been adopted and adapted by the Labour movement in this country, not only the Labour movement would have undergone an intellectual discipline and achieved an intellectual seriousness which have been conspicuously lacking, but Marxism itself would have been positively developed in the light of our significant English experience. Instead of this the primitive Marxist categories were suddenly revived from obsolescence, invested with a new dogmatic intransigence, and given an unprecedented prestige by the successful issue of a 'proletarian revolution' in Russia. Marxism, or rather Marx-Leninism, was now the creed of a vast empire. The nature and consequences of the Russian Revolution need to be examined.

In the Russian Revolution the proletariat partly fulfilled the role attributed to it by primitive Marxism. The Russian industrial proletariat was a local conglomeration, created by the necessities of capitalist industry, of workers who in the rest of the country

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were no less oppressed, but were scattered and impotent. The Russian industrial 'proletariat' was a relatively compact body of workers, associated industrially and politically, who were able to give decisive focus to the discontent of a vastly more numerous class of impoverished peasants: with the result that a mighty anti-feudal revolution was controlled and directed by a small body of Marxist Socialists.

This remarkable revolution has, like the other great revolutions which preceded it—the English parliamentary revolution, the American Revolution and the French Revolution — brought with it a great outburst of the creative powers of the people which has achieved it. And this liberation of the creative forces, as in the past, takes conscious form as an immensely heightened *national* consciousness. This revolutionary consciousness of a national rebirth is, indeed, the real basis and justification of creative, as opposed to regressive, nationalism. If we Englishmen desire to know what it *feels* like to be a Russian to-day, we should turn to the proud and lovely words of Milton:

Methinks I see in my mind a noble and puissant nation rousing herself like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks. Methinks I see her as an eagle mewing her mighty youth, and kindling her undazzled eyes at the full mid-day beam; purging and unscaling her long-abused sight at the fountain itself of heavenly radiance, while the whole noise of timerous and flocking birds, with those also that love the twilight, flutter about, amazed at what she means.

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The experience, which Milton magnificently expressed, is the sudden and miraculous unfolding of the slowly gathered and hitherto suppressed creative powers of humanity, manifest as such an unfolding must be, in an individual nation. Suddenly a people, not knowing where it is going, bursts into a new world, and conquers a new dimension for human existence. It is the moment when — to use the words of Milton again — ‘God shakes a kingdom with strong and healthful commotions to a general reforming’; when the body of the chosen people is seized with the pangs of labour, and the nations are ‘amazed at what she means’. The great English poets of the age felt it at the outbreak of the French Revolution. It sings for us still in the ‘Marseillaise’:

Allons, enfants de la patrie.

De la patrie! The essence of this experience is that one’s own nation is privileged, even by the depth of its suffering, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles. It is the bearer of a message of universal import; it does battle not for itself but for all mankind. And, I firmly believe — and history confirms my faith — that in such a condition of creative inspiration a nation is irresistible, and inexpugnable.

As England was the first people in Europe to be inspired by this creative nationalism, Russia is the last. England, America, France, Russia have all experienced this creative travail. In this perspective, Fascism appears to be a spurious creative nationalism; and its spuriousness is manifest in its *conscious* insistence

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on the destiny and privilege of the *race*. The concept of the race is the concept of the nation eviscerated of its international and universal significance. A nation is creative because it at a given moment incorporates what Dostoevsky called an 'omni-human' idea; the very mark of a nation in the throes of creativeness is that it is not racially exclusive, but welcomes into its nationality men of other races, as the commonwealth welcomed the Jews, as America and France welcomed all nations, as Russia gathers into one its vast diversity of peoples. The creative power of positive nationalism is international in its feeling and intention. Racialism is directly and deliberately opposed to the internationalism of creative revolution.

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The danger of the prestige of the Russian 'proletarian revolution' lies in this, that, although as experience it is intensely national, in the creative sense we have tried to convey, Russia to-day cannot easily *think* its own experience. The Marxist categories are not responsible to the lived reality of this experience. That is relatively unimportant, so far as Russia herself is concerned. The Russian is in no danger of real delusion; he is free to encounter what life will bring to him in his new world, and all that is now inadequate and partial in his thinking of his own reality will be supplied by experience itself. But the Englishman, who works with the categories of Russian Marxism and does

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not suffer them to be steeped in the English tradition and transformed by it, is in very grave danger of delusion indeed. In his intellectualization, those categories are divorced from the national experience in which alone they become living reality. He thinks his own country abstractly (which is necessary) but he does not return from the abstract to the concrete (which is also necessary); he does not submit himself to its life. Indeed, he also thinks Russia abstractly; it seldom occurs to him that the leaders of the Russian Revolution itself were revolutionaries first, and Marxists afterwards, or that they were but a tiny clement in a vast revolutionary urge which had been stirring in Russia for a century before — an almost unanimous conviction among all men who thought at all that the Russian autocracy was a base and degraded system of government, unworthy of men. Universal in the Russian consciousness — that is the consciousness of the individualized and individual Russian — was the feeling: ‘Ecrasez l’infâme!’

There is no such feeling in England to-day against the English system of government. The average Englishman — of whatever class — has much rather the feeling that his system of government is admirable in itself, and still the envy of the world. Certainly, he is in part the victim of delusion; but he is not wholly deluded. Even if he were wholly deluded (which he is not) his condition of delusion would make irrelevant the abstract pattern of thought derived not from the Russian reality, but from the Russian intellectualization of its own reality, which is a very different thing.

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The English Marxist who has the courage to think the Russian reality — the actual and concrete process of history in Russia before, and during, and after the Russian Revolution — will come much nearer to being able to think the English reality than he who credulously swallows the very partial and inadequate Marx-Leninist orthodoxy. He will at least begin to understand of what crucial significance was the universal conviction of conscious men in Russia for a century before the actual Russian Revolution that the Russian autocracy was an infamous thing.

English democracy is not an infamous thing, either in itself, or in the estimation of those who live under it. Least of all does the working man believe it to be an infamous thing, because English political democracy, as it exists to-day, is mainly his own achievement and the reward of his own toil. He was still struggling for it even a generation ago. Therefore, the first thing an English revolutionary should do is to inquire into the nature of English democracy, not in the attitude of one making a barren and contemptuous intellectual inquisition, but in the very different attitude of one who feels an instinctive reverence for a thing for which Englishmen have struggled and suffered, a thing which has been slowly and not even yet wholly conquered, during a great century, by the working class.

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My experience may have been unfortunate, but it has appeared to me that the contemporary English

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Marxist is very remote from the English working man. His real enthusiasm is for an abstract proletariat; he condescends a little towards reality when it takes the shape of the Russian working man, but thereby he comes no nearer to it. With the ideals of English working men he makes no contact, and of them he has no understanding. He does not believe in ideals. The notion that the key to the English working man might be found in his religious history is to such a mind fantastic: for to him all religious history is the history of illusion, and therefore unreal.

This attitude of mind is sterile. Out of it no creative revolutionary movement in this country can ever grow. 'The roots of the present', said Bishop Stubbs, 'lie deep in the past, and nothing in the past is dead to the man who would learn how the present comes to be what it is.' The past of England is a history of class-struggle, it is also a history of the struggle of economic forces, but it is also a history of political and religious idealism. No man can really understand the former, unless he also understands the latter. Still less can any man claim to be an English revolutionary, if he does not understand that it is at the moment when the deep economic forces — powers derived not from naked 'interest' but from the struggle of social life towards more life — manifest themselves in the individual man as an overwhelming religious passion, that the forces that make for true revolutionary change begin to stir. Not until the spirit is abroad in England again, as it has been at least once in our history, that 'God is revealing himself to his servants, and as his manner

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is, first to his Englishmen', will there be dynamic power in English Socialism. That subtle and simple harmony of national pride and religious humility is what we wait for. Without it, there will be no social revolution in this country. It may be inevitable, but it will not happen.

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To return to the paradox of Russian nationalism, which needs further examination. We need to understand that it is both genuine nationalism and genuine revolution. I have indicated that revolution — real and profound revolution — is the source of creative nationalism. For creative nationalism depends, as the history of nations makes plain, on the achievement of a unique advance of universal significance by a particular people. The only possible creative advance for a capitalist nation is towards Socialism. But it is precisely the developed capitalist nations which have inordinate difficulty in making this advance directly. For two chief reasons, first, because they are democracies. They are not democracies by accident. Capitalist development and democracy are intimately related. Economic liberty for the individual demands for its complement political liberty for the individual. But the use of the political power of the individual to compel society as a whole to pass beyond economic individualism is so paradoxical that democracy hesitates when confronted with this necessity which it

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cannot recognize. The evolutionary advance is so revolutionary, its consequences so unfamiliar, and its preconditions in the individual understanding so exacting, that democracy appears rather to be the solvent of socialist purpose than a necessary step to its achievement.

The second main reason why developed capitalist societies cannot advance into Socialism is that they are seldom economically self-sufficing. And this again is no accident. For the character of typical capitalist progress is that it sacrifices economic self-sufficiency in order to gather in the wealth of the world in exchange for its commodities. Capitalist democracy, in order to advance towards Socialism without fear of external interference or internal starvation, needs a continent to turn in; but where it has had a continent to turn in, as it has had in the United States, the wealth accumulated by its capitalist exploitation of its own resources has created an attitude of mind — the famous ‘rugged individualism’ — which makes even a modest form of Labour-Socialist movement exceedingly hard to establish.

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We begin to see why the proletarian revolution occurred, not in a capitalist society, but in one wherein capitalist development was rudimentary. It was the very ‘backwardness’ of Russia, from the point of view of bourgeois society, which marked out the

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Russian people as the destined instrument of the first Socialist revolution in history. 'Backwardness', from the bourgeois point of view, means not merely that mechanical manufacture and transport are rudimentary and that there is a solid basis of primitive agrarian economy (which enables society to subsist through upheaval), but also that democracy is a distant dream, and individualism is barely developed. In the history of nations which have undergone the economic and psychological development into bourgeois and capitalist societies the space between the primitive agrarian commune and the highly organized Communism of Soviet Russia is enormous; it would be six centuries of English history, supposing that we had achieved Socialism: which we have not. The psychological gulf, created and represented by those six centuries of historical development, is colossal. But in Russia that psychological gulf hardly existed. On the eve of the Russian Revolution 75 per cent of the peasant population of Russia still lived in village communes: that is, without any individual property in the land. The social psychology of the primitive commune could be carried over almost without interruption into the new communism.

Even so, the transition was not without a mighty struggle, which will go down in history as 'the collectivization of Russian agriculture'. This attempt would certainly have been inconceivable if it had really involved what most Western observers declared that it involved — the dragooning of 100 million peasants. The 'liquidation of the *kulak*' was from the Western

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point of view a grim tragedy; but it would have been impossible to accomplish if the majority of Russian peasants had not been just as prejudiced as the Russian government against the *kulak*. The prejudice in either case was different in origin and motive; but it had the same practical effect for the wretched *kulak*. The average Russian peasant hated him because he had struggled out of the commune; he was relatively advanced, enterprising, go-ahead, independent — much the same man who developed in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into the small free-holder, and subsequently into the stalwart English yeoman, the chief battler for English liberties.¹ At a later stage he developed into the independent farmer of America and Canada. The Soviet government determined to liquidate him because he was the obstacle to a collectivization which was, for him as an individual, a real regression. *

Thus it was, as we have said, the very backwardness of the Russian peasantry which made possible the most tremendous social revolution the world has yet known — short-circuiting of six centuries of Western development. That the genius of Lenin should have discerned that it was possible is a remarkable human achievement: or so it seems to a Westerner. To himself perhaps it was not astonishing, but almost natural. Scratch a Russian, said the familiar proverb, and you find a Tartar. Scratch Lenin, perhaps, and you would have found a peasant of the *Mir*.

The combination of a primitive agrarian economy, still based on the village community, with a vast

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territory which not only was economically self-sufficient under that primitive economy, but could remain self-sufficient under the totally different economy of industrial socialism: such were the unique conditions which made possible the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. In the psychological order these presented themselves as an absence of individualism so marked that from Pushkin to Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and Tchehov the most sensitive Russian intelligences naturally looked upon the Russian peasant of the commune as to the creature of another world; as an inordinate discrepancy between the conscious few and the unconscious many; as a feeling of desperate hatred and contempt on the part of the conscious few — in whom the imaginative genius of nineteenth-century Europe reached a pinnacle — against the unworthiness of the autocracy and the bureaucracy which exploited and deliberately brutalized this unconscious peasantry, and finally exasperated the intellectuals with a deliberate caricature of democracy in the Douma.

English Communists, who imagine that the Bolshevik revolution of Russia is an easy and a desirable thing to imitate in England, are as ignorant as they are perverse. They can have no knowledge either of Russian history or of their own. Perhaps — it is the chief excuse I can find for them — they are too young to remember the years in which the Russian autocracy was the object of universal detestation among all civilized men. My own memory stretches back only to the years immediately preceding the abortive

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revolution of 1905, and to a passionate schoolboy desire that the Japanese armies should help to *écraser l'infâme*. Also I remember, vividly, my feeling of blank astonishment, when I came to read Dostoevsky, that anything could be said on behalf of the Russian Tsardom at all. When the schoolboys of Europe come to feel about England, as I and my fellows felt about Russia from 1901 to 1905 and onwards, then will be the time to expect a similar revolution in England.

C.C.

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CHAPTER VI

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WE have shown how inadequate is the theory of 'orthodox' Marx-Leninism to the complex reality of the modern situation, and that much of its irrelevance derives from the unique condition of Russia in pre-revolutionary days. In order to reach a Marxism which may have some relevance to European conditions we have to return to the Marxism of Marx himself. In a previous chapter we dealt with the original 'vision' of Marx, and showed how the society of which that vision was true had ceased to exist; and that it had ceased to exist because the factors of disruption which Marx discerned in it were really present. Capitalist society, we do not doubt, would have destroyed itself, if property had remained adamant. But property yielded to the proletarian demand. And the result is not accurately described by saying that capitalist society took a new lease of life — indeed on Marx's principles that is an impossibility; it is truer to say that it changed into something for which there is no name, which we may provisionally call 'post-capitalist' society, to distinguish it on the one hand from a pure, or unmitigated, capitalist society, concerning which the vision of Marx was true, and on the other hand from a socialist society, which 'post-capitalist' society is not. To this 'post-capitalist' society we

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maintain the vision of Marx ceased literally to apply.

But Marxism is much more than an interpretation of a unique historical situation which has now been radically changed. It is a devastating criticism of an almost universal attitude of mind — what Marx called ‘the point of view of the individual is bourgeois society’. And the development of that grim form of capitalist society of which Marx prophesied the speedy dissolution, though it has been a development which renders the primitive proletarian dynamic inoperative, has not been such as to place ‘post-capitalist society’ entirely outside the category of ‘bourgeois society’. On the contrary, ‘post-capitalist society’ is the result of what Marx, towards the end of his life, was despondently to call ‘the bourgeoisification of the English proletariat’. In England, pre-eminently, what had happened was that the proletariat was received into bourgeois society.

Hence, Marx’s fundamental criticism of bourgeois society, and of the individualistic presuppositions of a bourgeois ideology, have lost nothing of their validity. Indeed they are more urgent than before, because ‘we are all bourgeois now’. It is in the direction of an understanding of Marx’s criticism of the bourgeois mentality, not of an illusory expectation of proletarian action by a non-existent proletariat, that the positive development of Marxism was to be hoped for. For such a development, involving a universal criticism, not merely of the bourgeoisie but of the bourgeoisified proletariat, would inevitably have brought about an understanding — and that no superficial one — between Marxist

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Socialism and whatever movements for social justice derived their inspiration from the Christian religion. This mutual understanding, indeed mutual illumination, was devoutly to be wished: for the divorce between these forces is lamentable.

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How serious may be the consequences of this untoward separation between Marxist Socialism and the Christian forces of a country may be seen pre-eminently in the case of Germany, where this divorce was one of the fatal impediments to Socialism and democracy alike. In Germany, where Marxism reached its highest point of theoretical development and practical organization, the Social-Democratic movement was from the beginning and throughout its career definitely anti-religious. That attitude was at least as much the fault of German religion as it was the fault of Social-Democracy.¹ From the beginning Lutheran orthodoxy set its emphasis on the irremediable corruption of existence: the powers that be were ordained of God simply to prevent the Devil from turning the world into pandemonium. Such a creed entered into a natural alliance with the Prussian system of authoritarian and incorruptible bureaucracy. The alliance of Lutheranism and the honourable German *Beamtentum* was a very different relation from the alliance of Russian Orthodoxy with the corrupt Tsarist bureaucracy, but it was as close. The Lutheran pastor was,

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in a real sense, a Prussian official. Thus, the Marxist Socialist movement of Germany developed in complete independence of, and in conscious hostility to, German Protestantism. The antagonism may be said to have had its roots in the very origins of Lutheranism, when Luther flung himself with religious zeal on the side of the princes and the nobility in the Peasants' War.²

The relation between Christianity and the working-class movement in England has been of a different kind. The 'poor priests' of the Lollard movement were deeply tinged with the doctrine of Christian social revolution; and in the relative freedom gained during the parliamentary revolution for the development of all kinds of Christian sects, having for their common element an emphasis on the worth of the individual and the validity of individual religious experience, there was woven into our religious history a thread of social preoccupation which is unparalleled in any other European country.³ If the more respectable, and the better endowed, kinds of Nonconformity were the main strength of the great liberal movement during the nineteenth century, during the same period the humbler kinds — in particular, the Primitive Methodists, with their working-class ministry of 'lay preachers' — played a great part in the shaping and organization of the Labour movement. And to the influences of these humbler, but vitally independent, forms of Christianity was partly due the stubborn and impenetrable indifference of the English Labour movement to Marxist theory. Significantly, it was

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only in Scotland, where a Protestant orthodoxy akin to that of Germany had been established since the sixteenth century, that Marxism had gained any real hold in Great Britain, prior to the Russian Revolution.

England, hitherto in history, has not been a congenial climate for orthodoxies. Just as politically it is the country of compromise; so theologically it is the land of heresy, though not of heresy-hunting. And if we may speak of a national characteristic, we probably have one here. Deep-rooted in the average Englishman of whatever class is an instinctive mistrust of logic rigorously applied in the field of individual and social conduct: indeed even in the realm of theology. As Newman remarked, it is not easy to work up even the educated and deeply religious Englishman to a passionate interest in dogmatics. That is why even the Church of England, however deeply she may disappoint them, is a unique institution of which in their hearts some of her most restive sons are proud — for her extraordinary comprehensiveness. It would (I suppose) be quite possible for a bishop of the Church of England to call himself a good Marxist, and indeed to be one — in the sense outlined in these pages — without there being the power, perhaps indeed even the will, to expel him.

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A synthesis between Christianity and Marxism is not only possible, but natural in England. Such a synthesis is not a synthesis between Christianity and

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Marx-Leninism; because that is a lop-sided development of Marxism, called forth in response to peculiar conditions: of which the first was the psychological necessity of being avowedly and militantly anti-Christian in a country where organized Christianity was not merely in alliance, but practically identical with the corrupt Tsarist State; and the second, the crude simplification of Marxism by eliminating from it, as unnecessary in a totally revolutionary country, the subjective religious element which is so evident and so distinctive in the original form of the theory. By this subjective religious element in Marxism we mean Marx's emphasis on the process of passing by way of a revolution in thought to 'revolutionary action' — not in the conventional sense of that well-worn phrase, but in the peculiar sense which Marx himself gave to it, of what he called 'practical-critical activity', that is, a condition in which a philosophical criticism of history and a practical political activity were identical: in religious terms, a mysticism of social action instead of a mysticism of contemplation. For the Russian Socialists all that was otiose and unnecessary. They did not need to learn how to become revolutionary-minded. They were that already. What they wanted from Marx was a science which should tell them that revolution was inevitable. Their attitude to Marxism was unique; and so was their distortion of it.

The subjective religious element in Marxism, which the Russians instinctively eliminated, is concerned precisely with the business of making men 'revolutionary-minded'. For Marx himself, the original problem

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was how to bridge the gulf between Hegel's dialectical philosophy of history, and relevant human action. 'Hitherto', as he said at the moment when the solution had taken possession of him, 'philosophers have variously interpreted the world: the real task is to change it.' The German idealist philosopher stood over against the world; he was a detached consciousness of the objective world. If he succeeded in explaining history to his satisfaction as a creative unfolding of the Idea, the process of history inevitably came to an end in his consciousness. It was completed in his understanding of it. On the one hand, some such understanding was obviously necessary to relevant action; on the other, it tended to inhibit action. The overcoming of this profound dilemma of the idealist philosophy was the basic problem with which Marx wrestled.

The problem was: how to bridge the gulf between thinking history and being it? That history was in some sort a creative or organic process, Marx had no doubt. Hegel had taught him that; but the conviction lay much deeper in him than Hegel's instruction. It was part of his Jewish inheritance, — a sense that history moved towards a culmination and that the movement was experienced as religion. History was a creative process: it had meaning, and its meaning was progressively manifest in the world in time. How was he to help that meaning disclose itself? That depended on two things — first, on the validity of his own understanding of the meaning of the historical process up to the moment of his own understanding of it; and

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second, on his readiness to submit himself to the task of further manifesting that meaning. We say manifesting — not elucidating. It was not enough to explain the meaning; it was necessary also to be part of the meaning. Here we touch the crux of the problem.

For it is obvious that if history is a meaningful process, my understanding of history as a meaningful process itself is part of the meaning. Anyone who understands history as a totally meaningful process, by virtue of that understanding, himself acquires a meaning: he becomes instrumental to a final purpose by his own mere existence. He is, as it were, totally validated. Whatever he does he does it unto the Lord — even though the Lord be no more than the impersonal, but significant and somehow creative process of history. But to acquire this sense of total validation, though it may be a precious means to intellectual and spiritual liberation, is to be given the burden of an intolerable freedom. It seems to make it a matter of indifference what the individual does. He is a part of history; and, whatever be his actual conduct, he shares in the meaningfulness of history.

The problem, which here arises in the particular form of the ethical consequences of the Hegelian interpretation of history, is a religious problem. It might even be called *the* religious problem, emerging again in a contemporary and secular form — forcing its way through the knowledge of the past, and the self-knowledge through the past, which is the distinctive enlargement of the modern consciousness. The discovery of a meaningful pattern in past history, in

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religious terms, is the discovery of God's working in his creation of Nature and Man. However uncongenial such language may be to the contemporary intelligence the experience which it seeks to convey cannot be abolished merely by using language which superficially avoids religious implication. The creative movement of life, in the individual and in society, is an ultimate mystery. By describing it as determined by 'the development of the productive forces', we have not assuredly done nothing, but we have done something which loses much of its value unless we remain vividly conscious that the final mystery of the process remains undiminished. Man's struggle with Nature, in and by which the productive forces *are* developed, is as mysterious as it was before. *Why* does man continue the creative struggle with nature beyond the point at which a purely animal existence can be sustained? The old answer of the Christian religion that he is driven to accomplish the divine purpose of human redemption is at least a manful recognition of the existence of a mystery and of the necessity of acknowledging it. It is strange that modern minds should so easily be persuaded that an increased knowledge of the mode of the 'divine working', or of the manifestation of life, is equivalent to an annihilation of the underlying mystery itself.

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Marx claimed, in *Das Kapital*, to have stood the Hegelian philosophy of history on its feet again, whereas

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it had previously been standing ‘on its head’. What he meant by this is partly conveyed in his dictum: ‘Consciousness does not determine life, but life determines consciousness.’ Whereas Hegel, he said, had interpreted history as the dialectical development of the absolute Idea, he interpreted it as the dialectical development of ‘the real life-process of man’. Whether the distinction was quite so absolute as Marx represented it may be doubted: for Hegel’s Idea was not wholly transcendent, and it was from Hegel himself that Marx had learned to sharpen his antitheses. But the practical consequence of the distinction was great: it was the difference expressed in Marx’s words: ‘The philosophers have only given various interpretations of the world: the real task is to change it.’ Marx sought to reduce ‘the real life-process of man’ to man’s methods of producing his own livelihood, which Marx called, in the same spirit of suggestive but deceptive generalization, his ‘life-production’. All the play of consciousness directed towards other than practical ends was ‘reflection’, or ‘superstructure’, or ‘ideology’. But it is best to let Marx speak for himself.

Man can be distinguished from the animal world by consciousness, by religion, by anything else you like. But Man begins to distinguish himself from the animal world, so soon as he begins to *produce* his own means of life — a step which is conditioned by his physical organization. Because Man produces his means of life, indirectly he produces his material life itself.

The mode in which Man produces his means of life

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is immediately dependent on the limitations of the means of life which already exist and are to be reproduced.

This mode of production is not merely to be regarded as the reproduction of the physical existence of the individual. It is already a definite kind of activity of the individual, a definite way of externalizing his life, a definite mode of life. As Individuals externalize their life, so are they. What they are, coincides with their production — both with what they produce and how they produce it. Thus, what individuals are depends on the material conditions of their production. . . .

Thus the fact is: Definite individuals, with definite modes of production, enter upon definite social and political relations. Empirical observation must in each separate case show the connection of social and political organization with production, empirically, without speculation or mystification. Social organization and the State incessantly arise out of the life-process of definite individuals, — but from these individuals not as they may appear in their own or others' idea of themselves, but as they *really* are: i.e. from themselves as they work and materially produce — from themselves as they are active under definite material limitations, pre-conditions and conditions which are independent of their free-will.⁴

This position Marx pitted against Hegel's 'idealist' interpretation of history, which he said, neglected the presupposition of history: namely, 'that men have to be able to live, in order "to make history"'. But it may be doubted whether Marx himself ever clearly decided

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whether he was asserting an all-sufficing and entirely new motivation of the historical process, or simply asserting the reality of limiting conditions within the framework of which the process of history must move. If he thought he was doing the former, he was certainly mistaken; but it is more reasonable to suppose that he knew he was doing the latter, and that any apparent exaggeration in his assertions was mainly due to the polemical necessity of reacting against the abstract idealism of the 'Young Hegelians', for whom the driving power of history was the Absolute.

Marx's positive achievement was that he brought into the light of day a neglected but vital element in the historical process — the actual material development of the social and livelihood-producing animal, man; and he brought this factor into daylight at a moment in history when it was assuming an importance enormously greater than ever before. The advent of large-scale power-production, and the consequent collectivization of the productive processes, constituted a revolutionary change in human society and in the relative weight of the factors which shaped its course. Not only was this change revolutionary in itself, but it was the parent of incessant revolutions to come. The tempo of history, the nature of man, were entirely changed: and the human consciousness was, to all intents and purposes, unaware of what had happened and blind to what would happen. The old traditional notions of man were being imperceptibly eviscerated by this continuous and uncontrolled revolution of the material bases of human life.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOCIETIZATION OF MAN

MARX saw that the traditional, the 'common-sense' notions concerning the nature and the freedom of man were being emptied of all truth by the incessant revolution of the material bases of human life. Man's consciousness must therefore undergo a corresponding revolutionary change, or he would completely lose control of human history. This revolutionary change in human consciousness from 'the point of view of the individual in bourgeois society' to that of the member of 'societized humanity', is what Marx tried to express in his *Theses on Feuerbach*. In the 6th Thesis, he had put forward the startling proposition: that 'the human essence is not an abstraction inhabiting the separate individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relations'. Marx there propounds as an absolute truth what is, in fact, only a relative one.

How far he himself believed it to be an absolute truth, it is impossible to say: but there is no doubt at all that it was an extraordinarily important discovery. It was the basis of the 'new (i.e. historical) materialism'. As Marx explained in the 10th Thesis, 'the standpoint of the old materialism is bourgeois society, the standpoint of the new is human society, or societized humanity'. That is to say, in this new form of society,

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which increasingly used collectivized machine-production to 'produce its life', society itself, in the sense of the new ensemble of relations of production, was the substance of man. The autonomous individual was an illusion. Man, though he was not yet aware of it, was societized. His centre of gravity, so to speak, was no longer in himself, but in the social and economic collective; and it was really beyond his power as an individual to replace his centre of gravity inside himself again. On the ethical plane, it was henceforward impossible for man to be good unless society was good. It was only through improving society as a whole that man could now improve himself.

To change the world — to change human society — was Marx's overruling purpose. In order to change the world, you must understand the world. Without an understanding of society there was no possibility of what Burke called 'purchase' upon it. Leaving quite aside the desirability, on purely ethical or religious grounds, of a social revolution, the fact was that this new form of society — industrial capitalist society — was itself revolutionary. The choice was not between being revolutionary and being conservative: that was the bourgeois individualistic illusion. The choice was between being consciously revolutionary or the unconscious instrument of revolution. Why, property itself, in its new form of industrial capital, was an agent of destruction: it destroyed itself, and it destroyed human beings as well. (It is astonishing how few people, even to-day, realize that capitalist crisis is a wholesale and portentous destruction of property by itself.)

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It is not that Marx would have denied the truth of the old dictum that you cannot change society without changing men. But so long as that dictum is applied by the individual in bourgeois society to himself and his similars, it remains illusory, and gives no 'purchase' on reality. Man is continually being changed, independently of his own free will. The change of heart, or change of consciousness, to which he is now summoned is to be aware of this process of revolutionary change in which he is totally involved. This is the reality of that change in the individual which is necessary if society is to be positively and consciously changed. Without this, individual repentance is incomplete and doomed to irrelevancy. In other words, this is the contemporary form of repentance, the effective form of the religious acknowledgment that 'we, in our Selves, are nothing'.

§

Where we have used, metaphorically, the term 'centre of gravity' Marx used the philosophical term, essence (*Wesen*). Our metaphor mitigates what is intolerable in the Marxist paradox. To declare that man's *essence* is the ensemble of social relations is almost incomprehensible to the mind. Yet, since it must be admitted that even to-day, after ninety years, singularly few people — and by no means a large percentage of Marxists professed — have grasped, either through Marx's propositions or by other means, the revolutionary change in the nature of Man and society which

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Marx had recognized and was engaged in formulating, it may be that Marx was justified in his absoluteness of expression. But as it stands it is more than a hard saying: it implies that the individual person has verily ceased to be. That is, of course, impossible. But there is *very* much more truth in that terrifying declaration than most of us care to admit, or perhaps are capable of admitting. Involved in the process of admitting it is a painful spiritual mortification and regeneration. ‘To grapple with Marx to the point of real understanding’, says John MacMurray, ‘is to have a spiritual experience of the first order.’

We are infinitely less free than we imagine; as we begin to realize dimly and with bewilderment, to-day. For example, probably not more than one in a hundred of the adult inhabitants of Great Britain positively desires the colossal and life-crushing expenditure on armaments to which we are now committed; probably nine out of every ten are definitely opposed to it as conscious individuals. Probably the same holds true, and in much the same proportions, of the inhabitants of Germany. Yet some terrible and inscrutable necessity compels them to arm against one another on a scale such that to contemplate it lucidly threatens one’s sanity.

That threat to one’s sanity which is offered by the modern reality is the objective counterpart of Marx’s proposition, which likewise seems to threaten one’s sanity. For there is only one adequate explanation of that gruesome and fantastic contradiction between the desire of 90 per cent of the individuals who compose

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society and the action of society itself: it is that for all practical purposes the collective is real and the individual is not. What is sinister in the world of 1939 is that the bad men have realized this truth, while the good men have not. Perhaps it is not a truth of a kind that the simple good man can realize; he has (it almost seems) to become a mystic, a saint and a martyr in the process. Hence the weakness of most pacifism. To say that, if only the individual would refuse his participation in war or in the preparations for it, the gruesome race to destruction of the armed collectives would cease, is shallow. The individual *cannot* refuse his participation, except by withdrawing from the collective altogether. It is practically impossible — without a preparedness for self-sacrifice that is not to be found in one man in ten thousand — for individuals who compose the collective to assert their reality against the collective, even though 90 per cent of them abominate what the collective is doing. That is the grim truth contained in Marx's strange proposition.

§

It is greatly to be regretted that Marx did not really examine the psychological implications for the individual of his discovery. Not that it is reasonable to blame him for not having done so. He had discovered that, in the main, the individual in contemporary society was an illusion. He said an illusion, absolutely:

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what he meant was that nine-tenths or ninety-nine hundredths of the individual, as currently conceived by politics, or religion, or philosophy, or common sense, was an illusion. The individual was, to use the powerful word taken over from Hegel by Marx, 'self-alienated' (*selbstentfremdet*). For most *practical* purposes, the individual was an illusion, and the reality was society. Marx wanted to concern himself with the reality. Having discovered what it was, Marx did not bother himself with the psychological and religious implications of his discovery. He wanted not to interpret reality, but to change it. Having determined that the individual was illusion, and society the reality, he turned to the reality.

Of course, Marx wanted to change individuals; but he was now convinced that the only way to change them was by changing society. But it belonged to the essence of the new industrial society, as he understood it, that it was incessantly changing itself, and now changing itself at a continually accelerated tempo. Once competitive machine-production was really predominant, as it had begun to be in England when Marx achieved his 'philosophical revolution', then the pace of socio-economic revolution became breakneck. By that ever-accelerating socio-economic revolution, the proletariat was continually increased; and the proletariat, acting in obedience to its primitive life-instinct, would overthrow the individualist and bourgeois political superstructure of society. Thus Marx could say in 1845: 'Communism is for us not a *condition* which has to be established or an *ideal* towards which

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reality must advance. We call Communism the *actual* movement which abolishes the present condition.¹

The truths which Marx was seeking to formulate were of crucial importance; but there was a real danger in this method of formulating them. If the individual was illusion, and the collective itself the self-revolutionizing reality, how could the individual consciously co-operate in the historical process at all? It was all very well for Marx to declare that 'all social life was essentially practical: all the mysteries, which divert contemplation into mysticism, find their rational solution in human practice and in the understanding of this practice'. Marx was caught between the jaws of an immense paradox. In so far as social life *was* practical in this sense, it was autonomous and automatic: the continuous revolutionizing of the socio-economic basis of capitalist society, the creation of the proletariat, the 'revolutionary' activity of the proletariat — all these things happened and would happen, of themselves. To become conscious of this process of historical necessity in which one was involved — what could that really mean? How did such consciousness manifest itself in actual human experience, in the conscious life-experience of the individual? The process is described in *The Communist Manifesto* as one whereby members of the bourgeoisie, 'having achieved a theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole', throw in their lot with the proletariat. But there is no explanation of the fact *why* this understanding of the illusoriness of the individual should have so potent an effect upon the individual; nor why, after

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this quasi-miraculous change, the individual should have any practical effect upon the autonomous and revolutionary development of society?

§

Such questions as these, Marx would have said in 1845, were 'purely scholastic questions'; and at that time he was fairly entitled to dismiss them as such. There was a proletariat, suffering and politically unconscious; the practical duty was plain, and heroic — to try to give it intelligent political leadership. The other questions could wait. What was the use of asking why the theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole should have a dynamic effect upon the individual? The fact of experience was that, in Marx's case, it did have this effect. What was the use of asking how the action of this converted individual could make any difference to the revolutionary evolution of the historical process? 'In practice alone can man demonstrate the concrete efficacy (*Diesseitigkeit*) of his thinking.'² History would show. Now was the time for faith and works: the theology could wait.

Such language is by no means merely metaphorical. In the 'philosophical revolution' of Marx, we are in fact confronted with a peculiar form of religious conversion, operative in a man of genius. The *Theses on Feuerbach* are a testament of illumination. Quite suddenly, the individual is possessed with the vision of his own nothingness in respect of modern society:

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he, the individual, is nothing and the process of history, moving with a sublime inevitability and at an ever-increasing tempo towards a triumphant consummation, is everything. I have no doubt that at that moment there was a veritable 'self-annihilation' in Karl Marx; nor should I hesitate to say that he was possessed by God. We may — indeed we must — criticize him for having simply deified the process of history: but we must not forget that Christianity is no less bound to regard history as the progressive revelation of God, and certain historical figures as pre-eminently the instruments of the divine purpose. Marx assuredly was one of them.

But, though we must insist on the profoundly religious nature of Marx's philosophic revolution, we must insist no less that his theory, as he had formulated it, was inadequate. He had elevated a partial though profound truth to the status of a whole truth, and had over-simplified human experience. He was leaving things out. We have no call to condemn him: there was practical and urgent work to be done. Would that we were one-half so zealous in our Father's business as he was! But what was a venial error in Marx himself has grown to be a diabolism in his successors.

The individual cannot be dissolved into the social collective as completely as Marx dissolved him. Even if, *per impossibile*, the individual *could* be as completely dissolved into the collective as Marx claimed he was, still it would always be true that the collectivity of the human essence would need to be apprehended by an individual mind. In other words, the necessary

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condition of apprehending the collectivity of man is what Aristotle named as the perfection of the activity of the individual as such: an achievement of contemplation. The 'theoretical understanding of the movement of history as a whole' is an act of religious or philosophical contemplation, which itself can only be recognized or understood by a spiritual philosophy. Nothing, save a dogged refusal to undertake a conscious understanding of itself, could prevent the 'new materialism' from being the parent of a new spiritualism. What in fact the 'new materialism' achieves, on the side of the subject, is an immense and salutary self-purification. The spirit in man is thereby disengaged, in a moment of vision, from its own hitherto unconscious immersion in a system of socio-economic necessity. The Pauline psychology is directly appropriate to the Marxist revolution: which, indeed, supervenes on the discovery of the appalling extent to which, in an industrial capitalist society, we are involved in 'the body of this death'. Certainly, there is one cardinal distinction between the Pauline and the Marxist *Weltanschauung*. Marx believed that this world was proceeding, by divine necessity, towards a consummation in time; whereas Paul was assured that it was moving to a consummation beyond time. But, in fact, Paul's 'beyond time' — 'in a twinkling of an eye we shall all be changed' — and Marx's 'in time' — 'pre-human history ends and human history begins' — are by no means so far apart as the phrases suggest. They are certainly not antipodal, as some modern theologians would contend. For both, Paul and Marx, at least,

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the consummation is not homogeneous with that which precedes it. There is, for both, an entry into a new *order* of existence. The real distinction between them must not blind us to their real affinity — probably peculiar to the Jewish prophetic genius.

The psychology implied, and indeed taken for granted, in Marx's 'philosophical revolution' is a religious psychology, with profound affinities to the Pauline psychology. We are compelled to make explicit the psychological implications of Marx's 'new materialism' in order to prevent it from becoming unintelligible, or from being degraded into a new form of the 'old materialism', as it becomes for example in Marx-Leninism.³ The importance tacitly assigned in it to the individual consciousness is enormous, hardly, if at all, less than that assigned to the socio-economic collective itself: but it is a regenerated consciousness, having as it were shed the impediments of unacknowledged necessity, and disengaged itself from the grave-clothes of unconscious material compulsions. This regeneration of the individual consciousness (we insist) has a natural, indeed an inevitable, affinity with Christian psychology, if it is not perfunctory.

§

We may dwell on this affinity a little longer: for it is remarkable. But the affinity of Marxism is not with the secularized psychology of conventional Christianity. It is an affinity with the psychology of the

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Christian saint and mystic. Marxism meets with Christianity on the heights, and in the depths — but not at all in the middle regions where Christianity serves as a mere ‘deodorant’ of an atheistic society. We have no sympathy with those who react to Marx’s disturbing declaration that ‘the human essence is the ensemble of social relations’ with pious horror as a piece of atheism. It will be time for them to pronounce whether or not it is atheistic when they have received the truth of it into their hearts. The reason they recoil from it is not because it is atheistic, but because its truth is intolerable.

In order to become aware of its implications, let us return to our former statement that it is practically impossible for the individuals who compose the modern collective to assert their reality against the collective, even though 90 per cent of them dislike, or even abominate, what the collective is doing, say, in this crucial matter of modern war and the preparations for it. This assertion of the reality of the individual against the modern collective is, we say, practically impossible, because to do so involves a physical separation of oneself from the collective which is impossible to-day. In the modern world, to separate oneself from *this* collective is to enter *that* collective: and there is no collective in the world to-day which is not obedient to the compulsions of modern war and modern preparation for it. To-day there is no New England or New Holland across the ocean to which men may escape; the only possible way of escape is by a road which leads out of existence and time altogether into the world of

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spiritual contemplation or mystical communion. The human essence may be the ensemble of social relations; but the discovery which filled Marx with exultation in 1845 might fill him with despair to-day. The self-alienation of man-in-society has reached an extremity which even he hardly foresaw. He could put his faith in social revolution by the instrumentality of the working class; in 1939 the Marxist knowledge does not lead to the Marxist hope. Nevertheless, it is probable that Marx would be less confounded than many Marxists by the spiritual outcome of the situation which he was the first to discern. For his discovery that the human essence was the ensemble of social relations was intended to add a new dimension to human awareness: so that men, having understood this truth, should understand that individual goodness was now an illusion except it was corroborated and substantiated by the goodness of the collective. He intended it to have the effect upon others that it had upon himself—to make them dedicate themselves completely to the moralization of the collective.

Unfortunately, though not surprisingly, his discovery was almost incomprehensible to the common run of men. One could make this strange point of view one's own only for a moment of illumination, one of those moments when, as Paul Claudel has said, the soul is drawn out of the body as a sword from the sheath. It has taken more than ninety years for the truth of Marx's vision to begin to dawn upon us. To-day the individual man who desires to be good has

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begun to realize that his goodness is futile without a good society to give it substance.

The world of everyday life is now so radically different from the world of the gospels and the effort required to interpret the universal truths that derive from the Gospel in terms that mean anything in a world of intricate social organization is so immense that the whole thing appears remote from life as it has to be lived. True, there remain certain ineradicable experiences in human life—birth, marriage and death—where the essentially personal message of the Gospel takes on living meaning for some people, or may be for most people for a short time; but the vast majority of men live in a world which seems to have little enough to do with what Jesus talked about or the Church teaches.⁴

That is a Christian man's ratification, in experience, of the truth of Marx's discovery that the human essence is no longer something dwelling in the individual, but 'the ensemble of social relations'. The number of men is steadily increasing who can no longer deceive themselves in this regard. In the world that is, in the society that is, Christian conduct is impossible. There are, there can be, no good men in the world to-day. Decent men, well-meaning men, men who would be good if only they could see the way,—these there are by the thousand, or indeed the million: but good men, no.

Ah, but this is an old condition; an everlasting condition. 'There is no health in us', says the general confession. But no, it is a new condition: for there is no possibility of repentance. It is no use our begging

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God to grant that ‘we may hereafter lead a godly, righteous and sober life’. It cannot be done. Or, rather, the demand it makes is so fearful that we cannot face it. Come out of that earthly city, it says. But we cannot. The earthly city is everywhere to-day, and evil everywhere. We cannot delude ourselves concerning the meaning of the millions of hopeless and hapless refugees whom no earthly city will receive. Anti-Christ has conquered the world. There is only one kind of Christian men in the world to-day. They are saints.

§

Ninety years ago, Marx who saw what had happened and foresaw what would happen, believed in a new Messiah — the suffering proletariat. It was a noble dream: the outcome of a strange and passionate conviction that Christianity was dead, and that man’s redemption had passed into the very process of history. The possibility of a synthesis between his philosophical revolution and the Christian faith was remote from his mind. Christianity, in practice — and there was for him no other test of truth — appeared to him to be wholly identified (as indeed it almost wholly was) with a property-system which was compelling the new collective life-production to be destructive of humanity. ‘In the development of the productive forces a stage is reached, in which productive forces and means of communication are created which, under existing conditions, only do harm; they are no longer productive

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forces, but destructive forces.'⁵ The function of the Christian Church as Marx saw it in action, was to defend and sanctify those 'existing conditions'. Is it not so, even to-day, when the destruction which needed a man of genius to discern it in 1845, stares the common man in the face and appals him?

Marx turned to practice: to the political organization of the new class of men whose humanity was being destroyed by the demonic combination of collective life-production and an individualistic property-system. 'The first step in the workers' revolution', says *The Communist Manifesto*, 'is the raising of the proletariat to the ruling-class, the conquest of democracy.' Note that, for Marx in 1848, the conquest of democracy and the raising of the proletariat to the ruling-class are, quite simply, synonymous. Since the conquest of democracy was not achieved in the full Marxist sense, even in England, till thirty years after his death, he did not live to see how grimly, in fact, practice would demonstrate the excessive 'terrestriality' (*Diesseitigkeit*) of his thinking. The element which he had left out of his revolutionary simplification, and perhaps had deliberately ignored as 'a purely scholastic question', was to reveal its reality.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DYNAMIC OF
SOCIAL REVOLUTION

MARX turned away from considering the implications of his philosophical revolution to the task of organizing and inspiring the working class politically. Nevertheless, the one working-class movement in which his influence was predominant, and to which he gave a philosophy, collapsed. The German Social-Democratic Party which was the main political creation of the Marxist inspiration, and was indeed described by Engels as the true inheritor, in virtue of the Marxist philosophical revolution, of classical German philosophy, has ceased to exist. It is a disconcerting *dénouement*. We cannot forget the maxim: 'In practice must the truth, i.e. the effectiveness and power the terrestriality: *Diesseitigkeit* — of our thinking be demonstrated.' The word was carefully chosen. Probably Marx invented it for his purpose. *Diesseitigkeit*: this-sidedness, its emancipation from any nonsense about another world. Perhaps — one cannot keep the thought from creeping in — perhaps the fate of the German Social-Democracy has indeed revealed the 'this-sidedness' of Marx's thinking, and revealed precisely this. Perhaps the maxim has all the sinister ambiguity of an oracle: and Marx's formulation of the

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supreme test of his philosophy in these words is a perfect example of tragic irony.

§

So far as his thinking went, Marx had dissolved the individual into 'the ensemble of social relations'. The 'practical-critical activity' which was governed by this acknowledgment consisted in identifying himself with the political movement of the proletariat, which (he believed) alone could effect a revolutionary change in 'the ensemble of social relations' by which the individual person was determined.

But by what road was the proletariat to advance to its goal? It was, in its main direction, quite simple. The first step was the conquest of democracy. Since the proletariat was, by hypothesis, a majority in a capitalist democracy this 'winning of the battle of democracy' was synonymous 'with raising the proletariat to the position of the ruling-class'.

The necessity of winning the battle of democracy was not self-evident to the proletarian, even in England. It took a good many years — at least half a century — to persuade anything like a majority of British proletarians that what they needed was the franchise; and in the 1790's they were as liable as not to deal very roughly with any peripatetic reformer who suggested to them the necessity of political reform. And England was one of the two great political nations.¹

And although in *The Communist Manifesto* Marx took

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it for granted that the working-class would struggle for political equality, in an essay written shortly before the Manifesto, he had publicly admitted that it was unlikely that the German working class would do so. In that essay he drew a significant distinction between the aptitude for revolution of the French and the English, on the one hand, and the Germans on the other. 'The former', he said, 'hold at least to the political illusion, which is the nearest to reality', while the Germans move 'in the realm of "pure spirit" and make religious illusion the driving power of history'.² This statement has a twofold interest. In the first place, it shows that Marx, who despaired of Germany as a supremely 'non-political' nation, 'beneath the level of history', regarded politics as situated in a mysterious region half-way between the economic reality and the religious illusion. In the second place, it raises the question why Marx did not pause to inquire how it came to be that the French and English were politically minded, while the Germans were not. He says, in another essay of the same period, that every class in Germany is lacking in 'that breadth of soul, which identifies itself, even though for the moment only, with the soul of the people: that touch of genius which kindles material force into political power';³ but he accepts this crucial difference of national idiosyncrasy as a datum. Indeed at moments he transmutes this political incapacity of Germany into the basis of a belief that proletarian revolution must happen there because it is the only kind of revolution that *can* happen there. In Germany partial and

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political revolution is inconceivable. ‘In France partial emancipation is the *conditio sine qua non* of complete emancipation.’⁴

No doubt Marx had in mind the immediate future of 1848; but the movement of his mind is bewildering. We have the uncomfortable feeling that he is leaving something out, or that his eager imagination is leaping over present despair to future confidence. In *The Communist Manifesto* he declares that the first step in the workers’ revolution is the conquest of democracy; in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (1843-4) he declares that Germany is incapable of conquering democracy. The connection between democratic revolution and proletarian revolution remains entirely obscure. France and possibly England, but France certainly, would proceed through the conquest of democracy to proletarian revolution, and so give the signal to Germany, which would achieve proletarian revolution without any previous conquest of democracy. The event has been otherwise. It has been Russia which has achieved proletarian revolution, without democratic revolution. But for Marx Russia hardly existed. If Germany was beneath contempt, Russia was beneath consideration. ‘Were it not’, he says, ‘that the total development of Germany surpasses the political development of Germany, a German could no more participate in the problems of to-day than a Russian can.’⁵ But again he leaves aside, perhaps as a subject too painful for close inquiry, *how* there had come to be this mysterious hiatus between the economic and the political development of Germany.

§

Why did this discrepancy exist between the ‘political idealism’ of France and England on the one hand, and Germany on the other? How came it that there was this lack of correspondence between the economic and the political development of the German people? It is astonishing that Marx did not directly grapple with this all-important problem. Was it that he was intoxicated by the absoluteness of his own theory? Socialism, he believed, was no longer an ideal, but a necessity, if the forces of production were not to become destructive. But what kind of socialism was a ‘necessity’? Was anything more in the way of socialism ‘necessary’ than just sufficient economic collectivism to enable the industrial machinery of a country to function without positive catastrophe? To use a pertinent modern example, is not the degree of socialism contained in the economy of National Socialism in Germany precisely the degree of socialism that is ‘necessary’ on Marx’s principles? More than this, may it not also be precisely the *kind* of socialism that is ‘necessary’? It is futile to reply that National Socialism is not the socialism that Marx meant. We agree: he would certainly have been horrified at it. But Marx had persuaded himself into the belief that that socialism, which was formerly an ideal, was now a necessity. We may apply his own test. The practical test of Marxist Socialism is that it has disappeared in its own country, and National Socialism reigns in its stead.

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What is the cause of this strange reversal of the Marxist hope? There are many causes, to be sought on different levels; and to some of them we refer elsewhere in this book. But the root cause of the Marxist failure to foresee and be forearmed against the dangers of democracy, was the Marxist inability to grasp that democracy was a real, specific and unique condition of society. This derived directly from an original failure to distinguish between the economic structure of a society and the society itself. An illuminating and revolutionary emphasis on the importance of the economic structure had hardened into an unwarrantable dogma that the economic structure is the reality of society and the political, moral and social superstructure an illusion.

The Communists deny this; they frequently point to a statement made by Engels in 1890 to the effect that 'the different moments of the superstructure . . . also exercise their influence on the progress of historic struggles'. It is true that Engels there verbally admits the positive influence of the 'superstructure'; but the admission is straightway withdrawn in the words which follow:

These moments all influence one another but in the long run the economic moment necessarily has the upper hand over the infinite multitude of chances (that is to say, of things and events whose intimate interconnection is so remote or so difficult to determine that one can consider it as nonexistent and neglect it).⁶

Those are significant words. The political, moral

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and social superstructure has an influence on the process of history, but the forces at work within it are so complicated that we cannot measure them. Therefore we neglect them, regard them as non-existent, and in fact treat the economic conditions as decisive. Decisive, one may well ask, of what? Not of history, obviously, for the unknown variables influence that. It is as though an anatomist were to proclaim that the nervous system is unfortunately so very complicated that the art of medicine must ignore it.

§

In spite therefore of any apparent and verbal reservation the fundamental assumption of Marxism is that the economic structure of society forms an auto-dynamic whole which insists (in the long run) not merely upon its own functioning — its *esse*, to use a scholastic distinction — but upon its optimum functioning — its *bene esse* — as well. It is imperative to examine this assumption.

In a sense, and by a metaphor, it is legitimate to say that the economic structure of capitalist society can and will insist on its own *esse*; it will insist on functioning freely up to a certain point, simply because, without this modicum of free functioning large masses of the people would suffer hardship of a kind that they feel to be absolutely intolerable, and their suffering would be translated immediately into active political discontent. The necessity of this minimal functioning

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of a capitalist economy is in fact constantly and automatically translated into a political imperative. But the 'necessity' of the maximal functioning of a capitalist economy (its *bene esse*) is not a necessity of this kind. It is, indeed, a misnomer to speak of it as a necessity at all. It is in no sense necessary that a motor car should run *well*. If it runs moderately well, and 'gets you there', it is good enough for most people. If it does not run at all, it is scrapped. So that we may say, metaphorically, that a certain minimal functioning is 'necessary' to a motor car, because if it functions below this point of efficiency, it is scrapped, and ceases to *be* a motor car. But its optimum functioning depends entirely upon the quality of satisfaction its owner desires to obtain from it, and upon the price, in money or in labour (i.e. in competing satisfactions), he is willing to pay for this satisfaction. So it is with the economy of a post-capitalist democracy. Its *bene esse*, its optimum functioning, is in no sense necessary; on the contrary it is entirely contingent on the price in competing satisfactions the members of the society are prepared to pay for this particular satisfaction. Are they willing 'to spurn delights and live laborious days' for the sake of the optimum functioning of the economy? Up to a certain point they may be; but such willingness is the product of a moral education. Moreover, beyond a certain point, it is manifest that they will be sacrificing more human satisfactions than they gain. And to fix the point for a society of millions of people at which the average gain in satisfactions, through attaining a higher degree of efficiency in the functioning

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of its productive processes, definitely ceases to outweigh the average loss in satisfactions caused by subordinating the individual person to the demands of this higher efficiency is a problem of incredible delicacy and complexity — so delicate and complex that it can be solved only tentatively, by groping experience, such as democracy alone permits.

A ubiquitous balancing of satisfaction against satisfaction is constantly going on in a democratic society. No doubt it is obfuscated by ignorance, which is expressed in mistaken notions of what are durable satisfactions. But even the relatively privileged person generally spends a lifetime in making these discoveries. And if, as we shall argue, the achievement of modern democracy is the entry of society as a whole into adult and responsible consciousness, it may take democracy its lifetime to discover the true hierarchy of satisfactions of man-in-society. If democracy were to be left to itself, we could suppose that its lifetime might last for ever, and that its freedom for peaceful self-evolution would enable it gradually to approach the optimum adjustment between material and spiritual satisfactions. Reached this optimum could never be. For the gradual extension of security, the progressive release of psychical energy from the demands of the struggle for mere existence, would continually open up new possibilities of finer satisfactions. One may even imagine that the appetite for these, growing by what it feeds on, might begin to make inroads on the appetite for material satisfactions, and a reverse process be set in motion.

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We leave such idle speculations, and concentrate on the point that there is no 'necessity' of any kind, or any order, that the economy of a post-capitalist democracy should achieve its maximum functioning, its *bene esse*. The maximum functioning of an economy, in itself, may be entirely prejudicial to the satisfactions actually desired by a majority of the members of the society.' Whether it be due to ignorance, or to untutored and instinctive wisdom, such is the actual feeling of the members of post-capitalist democracy to-day. They look with genuine repulsion, on the totalitarian societies, whether Communist or Fascist, and pray to be allowed to 'muddle through' into so much greater efficiency as is compatible with freedoms which are prized.

§

Thus there is a vast space, which Marx avoided to explore, between the ripeness of economic conditions for socialist revolution and the determination of the people to make such a revolution. Between the collectivism that is necessary, and the socialism that is desirable, is a great tract of desert country which can be crossed only by moral effort and self-sacrificing devotion. Unless Marx was to mislead his followers, it was imperative that he from his mountain-top should survey and map this debatable land. And it is one of the strangest facts about him that he made no attempt to do so. Apparently he was satisfied with his

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own theory that socialist revolution was inevitable. It was inevitable; but it would happen in different ways — in countries which ‘held to the political illusion’ and were capable of ‘political idealism’, the road lay through the previous conquest of democracy; but in unpolitical Germany there would be no half-way house, but one revolutionary rush to the goal.

Not that Marx turned a blind eye to the political ineptitude of his countrymen. As we have seen, he recognized it and theorized about it. But it seems never to have occurred to him that the fact could not be accounted for in terms of his own theory. Again, he had a clear insight into the combination of theoretical audacity and political incompetence of his German countrymen, but he seems never to have been visited by the suspicion that he also might be infected by the same dissociation. He had carried German speculative audacity to its furthest possible development; he had indeed brought German ‘philosophical idealism’ to the point at which it became consubstantial with the ‘actual movement’ of the proletariat. But the extremity of that paradox was itself a triumph of theoretical audacity. It is the kind of thing over which one instinctively shakes one’s head a little. It is magnificent, but . . .

Of this German idiosyncrasy, as we have said, Marx was acutely conscious — in others. Indeed, he seems to have considered that it was the specific contribution of Germany to contemporary history (that is, the history of bourgeois society) to make revolutions in theory only.

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Even historically, theoretical emancipation has a specific practical meaning for Germany. Germany's *revolutionary* past is theoretical: it is the Reformation. As it was then the monk, so it is now the philosopher, in whose brain the revolution begins.

Luther certainly conquered the slavery of devotion, because he replaced it by the slavery of conviction. He shattered belief in authority, because he restored the authority of belief. He changed the priests into laymen, because he changed the laymen into priests. He freed men from outward religiosity, because he established religiosity in the inward man. He freed the body from fetters, because he put the heart in fetters.

But, if Protestantism was not the real solution, it was the real posing of the problem. Henceforward, the layman's struggle was not against the priest outside him, but against his own inward priest, his own priestly nature.⁸

This is an illuminating instance of the singular combination of insight and obtuseness in Marx. Why did he not go on to consider how it was that the Protestant impulse took a form so different in England and America, where it went on working until it burst forth as political revolution — 'even to the reforming of Reformation itself'? Whereas in Germany the religious Reformation straightway identified itself with political reaction, even to the bloody suppression of the peasant revolt?

No doubt he would have said, and indeed he did say, that it was due to the unfortunate preoccupation of the German mind with pure theory, mere theology. Now

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he, Marx, was giving them a real theory which led to action. ‘The basic Germany’, he wrote at the end of the essay we have been quoting, ‘cannot make a revolution, without revolutionizing its basis. The head of this emancipation is Philosophy, its heart the Proletariat’.⁹ But what was to prevent this new revolutionary philosophy, this brand-new philosophy of revolution, becoming once more a mere theology in Germany? There was much to make it probable, for instance, the fact that it *was* the first philosophical theory of revolution — and there was nothing to prevent it, except the emergence of that mysterious ‘political idealism’ by which a particular class ‘feels itself primarily to be not a particular class, but the representative of the universal social need’.

§

This ‘touch of genius’, as Marx himself had recognized, existed or did not exist, quite independently of any revolutionary theory. It was a native and instinctive generosity and ‘breadth of soul’. Whence did it come? It did not come from the ‘productive forces’. Marx, who claimed to have accounted for everything, had not accounted for this ‘political idealism’, which on his own showing was the necessary dynamic of political revolution. Was the proletarian revolution a political revolution or not? Very oddly, Marx never seems to have made up his mind about that.

We maintain that the source of this ‘political idealism’ is religious idealism; and that it is high time it was

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recognized — even by Marxists. By religious idealism we do not mean an idealism necessarily associated with an existing form of organized religion. We make no doubt that Marx himself experienced this religious idealism with a truly revolutionary intensity. Whether it is associated with any existing form of religion will depend, we imagine, on the previous associations of that religion in the particular country. In Marx this religious idealism was consciously dissociated from religion in all its traditional forms. Indeed, it seemed to him to have had its birth in the ‘annulment’ of religion. He goes even so far as to say:

The evident proof of the radicalism of German theory (by which of course he meant his own) and thus of its practical energy, is its origination in the decisive and *positive* annulment (*Aufhebung*) of religion. The critique of religion ends with the doctrine that *Man is the highest being for Man*, and thus with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all conditions* in which man is a debased, servile, neglected, despicable being.¹⁰

Why the categorical imperative to overthrow all debasing social conditions should depend exclusively on the discovery that ‘Man is the highest being for Man’ is not explained. It is apparently regarded as self-evident. But this particular imperative follows, more cogently, from another belief: namely that man is made in the image and likeness of a loving God. It was the prophet of this religion who proclaimed that ‘The Sabbath was made for Man, not man for the Sabbath’. No doubt this was effectively denied in the official

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Christianity of Germany; as it is effectively denied by official Christianity everywhere. That is because, as Kierkegaard said, 'Officialdom is incommensurable with Christianity'. Nevertheless, even in Germany it was disastrous that Marxist Socialism developed in complete dissociation from Christianity. It became merely an opposite and atheistic orthodoxy; another theology, instead of a new religion.

This may have been inevitable. Perhaps there was in Germany of the 1840's no form of Christianity with which a working-class political movement could possibly ally itself. But in that case it was imperative that Marxism itself should have evolved into a religious Socialism. If this had been possible, Marxism would itself have become a form of Christianity of which Germany stood in desperate need, for the one deplorable element, even in the heroic form of German Lutheranism which has developed under the oppression of National-Socialism has been the complete and intransigent 'otherworldliness' of the Confessional Church.¹¹

That Marxism could and should have developed into a new form of Christian Socialism — that Marx revealed elements of historical, social and economic truth which Christianity must accept not only because they are true, but because their acceptance is indispensable to an understanding of the Christian gospel itself in the circumstances of to-day, is a main argument of this book. But the necessary condition of such a development was that Marxist Socialism should have existed, and struggled to maintain itself, in a

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working democracy. This never happened. German Social-Democracy passed the greater part of its rather uninspiring life under the conditions of pseudo-democracy; and when in 1918, for a brief period a genuine democracy was established in Germany, a new form of Marxist Socialism had entered from Russia and split the Social-Democratic movement from top to bottom. So that, as a matter of historical fact, Marxist Socialism has never been positively exposed to the test of democracy. But negatively it has been exposed to the test. Where democracy has managed to establish itself — in England and France and the United States — Marxism has never been able to take deep root: I believe, simply because it has no illumination to throw upon the problems of democracy. It was conceived, organized, and established into an orthodoxy in an academic remoteness from democratic reality.

It is, no doubt, impossible to prove that Marxist Socialism, in order to maintain its own vitality under the conditions of genuine democracy, would be compelled to develop into religious Socialism. But it is, in a sense, self-evident; because Marxism, in order to renew its own dynamic, which (as we have seen) perishes in the instinctive proletarian form so soon as complete political democracy is achieved, must needs have recourse to religious sources. But so long as Marxism developed only in the conditions of pseudo-democracy, the test was not applied to it. In theory, Marxism is anti-Christian. But that theoretical opposition derives from Marx's original identification of

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philosophical idealism with religion. This was misleading — probably even to Marx himself. For whereas Marx could claim, truly enough, that his philosophy differed fundamentally from that of the idealist philosophers, in that ‘they had only given various interpretations of the world, while his purpose was to change it’, such a distinction cannot be made between Marxism and Christianity. However much historical Christianity may have failed of its purpose, from the beginning it has recognized that an essential part of its purpose has been to change the world. The Christian God, as Pascal said, is *not* the god of ‘the philosophers and the savants’; and Christianity is not merely a doctrine that interprets the world, it is a faith which claims to change it.

§

That is to say, Marx, in distinguishing his philosophy from previous philosophy, as a philosophy which had its inevitable outcome in effective action, was merely insisting that his philosophy was a practical religion and not a mere theology. What is the relation between the religion of Marxism and the religion of Christianity? The answer to that will depend on what we mean by Christianity — and what by Marxism. Both, it seems to us, are current to-day in grievously impoverished forms. That is a symptom of our modern distress. Both Christianity and Marxism are abstract to-day.

First of all, Marxism has and can have nothing to

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say against the Christian conception of the divine first cause — deity as the ground of being and the source of Life. Marxism makes no attempt to answer the question: What is the cause of the movement of Life? It contents itself with declaring that human history is a meaningful process. In so far as Christianity really believes — and it is surely un-Christian if it does not — that the purpose of history is to approximate human society ever more closely to the condition of the Kingdom of God, and that man's purpose as an individual is to strive towards that consummation, there is and can be no conflict between Marxism and Christianity.

But Christianity does not, and cannot, believe that imperfection and evil will ever be wholly eradicated from human existence. The most complete establishment of social justice will not put an end to some of the most poignant of human miseries — the personal griefs of suffering humanity; and even for the establishment of social justice itself man is a very fallible instrument. ‘The insolence of office and the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes’ will not disappear with the establishment of the social ownership and control of the means of production. In so far as Marxism avows a faith in a proximate millennium, Christianity cannot accept it. Still less can Christianity accept the notion that the process of history can be consummated, or the Kingdom of God completely realized, in time: no event in the time-process can realize the Divine justice. And this radical Christian criticism of Marxist secular optimism is absolutely

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necessary if Marxism is not itself to become a fanatical illusionism.

So far the accounts are square. Marxism recalls Christianity to its duty of social revolution, to its fundamental rejection of the supremacy of property over persons, to the significance of its pristine impulse to community; and Christianity recalls Marxism to the dangers, indeed to the inevitable disillusion, of a purely secular optimism.

Marxism declares that the reality of the individual in capitalist society is largely illusory. It says, indeed, that it is entirely illusory; but this, as we have seen, is a paradoxical figure of speech. It is only as individuals that men can accept Marxism. What Marxism actually does is to effect a revolutionary change in man's conception of his own reality. It does annihilate the individual's 'bourgeois' conception of his own reality; but at the same time it makes him much more real. He knows himself to be a member of the One Man of human society, and at the same time he knows that he knows this. That power in himself, but not of himself, whereby he knows this, cannot be distinguished in fact from what is known to Christian experience as the Spirit. What Marxism accomplishes is a revolutionary purification of the individual; a catalysis of the religious illusion concerning Man into social reality, and religious reality. And this is necessary and to be expected and welcomed; for the historical moment has come when whatever hope there is of saving human society from degradation and destruction lies in the effort to make the Christian faith the dynamic of

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social existence. At this moment, therefore, traditional and organized Christianity is faced with its Day of Judgment. Hitherto, it has had an excuse for its un-Christian complicities. Marx himself insists on its excuse: the material conditions, the forces of production did not permit the Christian ideal to be realized save by saints. But now they do. They not merely allow it, but they make it imperative. If the productive forces are not to be still further perverted into forces of destruction, the abandonment of bestial warfare and the establishment of real Christian justice within and between the nations is imperative. Christianity cannot escape the fearful judgment of God.

Christianity will either become real, or it will disappear; Marxism will either become Christian or it will disappear. There will be left of a Europe which could discard the religious illusion, but could not re-create the religious reality, only a desert of barbarism and savagery. And the place where this issue will be decided is within the democracies. In them the ineluctable pressure upon Christianity to become socialist, and socialism to become Christian, will be manifest. There need be, of necessity, no unity of profession but there must be mutuality of understanding and unity of act.

The only relevant Marxist criticism of the revolutionary teaching of Jesus, would be that it was idealistic, first, in the sense that the social revolution it commanded could not be permanent because the forces of production did not permit it, and second, idealistic in the sense that it appealed to the ethical and religious

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motive in man. But what becomes of the first now that the forces of production do admit and, according to Marxism, demand precisely the social revolution which Jesus commanded? ‘From each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs’ was Christian long before it was Marxist. It appears that only the second criticism remains. But why not appeal to the ethical motive in man? Above all now, when the material conditions permit and demand the social revolution? The Marxist has two possible replies, of which one is stupid. The stupid one is that he doesn’t like the appeal to the ethical and religious motive. The other is that the ethical and religious motive does not exist. Man in society does not and cannot act from ethical motives; he can act only as he is driven — by what?

By the material forces of *Lebensproduktion*? By the class-struggle? By the sheer urge to maintain himself in existence? Not one of these motives is dynamic for social revolution in contemporary post-capitalist society. Marx himself, as we have seen, was curiously undecided concerning the nature of the revolutionary impulse itself. He spoke of revolutionary movement in history as something elemental — a datum. *Die periodisch in der Geschichte wiederkehrende revolutionare Erschütterung*: ‘the revolutionary upheaval that periodically recurs in history’.¹² But does it recur, does it even happen once — for example in Germany? The Reformation was Germany’s revolution, as Marx himself explained; but it was a ‘theoretical’ revolution. Germany’s democratic revolution, as Marx himself happily did

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not live long enough to witness, was hardly less ‘theoretical’. Germany’s socialist revolution was a Nazi *coup*. Germany’s incapacity for political revolution, her desperate lack of ‘political idealism’, did not have the effect at all of making her the pioneer of ‘proletarian revolution’. That equivocal glory fell to the despised Russia. Not that Marx could ever quite convince himself that Germany would be the pioneer of proletarian revolution. He wrote: ‘One day, Germany will find herself on the level of European collapse, before she has ever stood on the level of European emancipation.’ That may still be prophetic.¹³

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The point of this examination of Marx’s early thinking is to show that in annulling the ‘religious’, Marx also annulled the ‘ethical’; by annulling the ‘ethical’, he annulled also the ‘political’. Partly he concealed what he was doing from himself by an instinctive ambiguity, as in the crucial phrase: ‘the *Bildung* of the revolutionary mass’; where we cannot tell whether *Bildung* means simply ‘formation’ or ‘education’, although the difference is vital. Partly he looked upon specific and all-important national differences in ‘political idealism’ — the self-sacrificing enthusiasm that ‘storms heaven’ — as data, to be recognized, but insusceptible of analysis or explanation. In some peoples there was this generous ‘breadth of soul’; in others there was not. Partly, no doubt, his prophetic and

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philosophic imagination looked to a time when these national differences would vanish under the pressure of universal necessity. But this bent of his imagination was itself a mixture of Jewish millenism and philosophical idealism; he expected, so to speak, the Advent of the Absolute Idea.

For this Advent Marx made the theoretical preparation. He abolished the world of 'religious illusion'; but in fact he replaced it by a world which was governed by a secular theology,—the theology of historical materialism. The procession of the Godhead of Logos-theology, which became in Hegelianism the procession of the Absolute Idea in history, became in Marxism the procession of the social collective through the class-struggle. That is not intended as a jibe, nor even as a criticism. But the dissolution of the 'human essence' into a complex of productive forces and productive relations, on which this theology of materialism depended, had no absolute validity. It was an invaluable cathartic, but a poor staple diet. As a means to radical criticism of itself by bourgeois society, and of themselves by individuals in bourgeois society, it was salutary; but as a generalized psychological doctrine intolerable. You cannot tell man that he does not exist as an individual, and expect him to behave as a revolutionary. He will behave as a Yes-man.

No doubt Marx, who as an individual experienced all the religious immediacy of his own vision, could fairly claim that he had emancipated himself from 'the religious illusion'. Since he thereby became a religious hero himself, we need not cavil. But his misleading

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formulation of his own insights, dictated though it was by the more urgent needs of the working-class movement, involved that movement in self-stultification. He took it for granted, as we have seen, that the conquest of democracy by the proletariat meant the establishment of the proletariat as the ruling class. It has not meant anything of the kind. It has meant that the psychological, ethical and religious problems which he excluded from the realm of reality have had the opportunity to reveal themselves as fundamental. Nazism is the nemesis of a Socialism that ignores them. God forbid that we should blame Karl Marx for Nazism. But the deficiencies of his doctrine which he had not time nor opportunity to supply, his followers should have supplied.

THE REALM OF POLITICS

ONE of the major embarrassments of Marxist thinking, as it is conducted to-day, is its inability even to formulate to itself the difficulties that have arisen through the achievement of political democracy. It has of course become aware of those difficulties in practice; but it is unable to *think* them. It is not a damning criticism of Marx himself that he did not provide his disciples with an intellectual instrument for thinking these problems. They had not arisen in his day; he had no native connection with the workings of democracy; and in any case, the democracy that was worked in England prior to 1885 — the year of Marx's death — was a very different system from the democracy of 1939. Nevertheless, the terms in which he deplored the effect of an incomplete 'democracy' on the British working class are significant: he lamented it as the 'bourgeoisification of the English proletariat'.

On reflection, it appears unreasonable that Marx should deplore such a process. Implicit in his attitude was the demand that the proletariat, while beginning to participate a little in bourgeois prosperity, and to participate rather more in bourgeois political power, should yet remain unaffected by the ethos of bourgeois society. This demand was superhuman; it was, indeed, on the assumptions of Marx's own philosophy, to ask

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for a miracle. The natural process was that which was happening: as the more privileged of the proletarians gained entrance into bourgeois society, they adopted the values of bourgeois society. Marx was asking that, instead of this, they should be converted to a point of view which consciously repudiated the individualistic values of bourgeois society. For such an expectation there was no warrant at all in Marx's own philosophy. The notion that the proletarians, instead of becoming bourgeois, ought to become Marxists, was singularly non-Marxist.

We do not blame Marx so much for entertaining, as the modern Marxists for not abandoning, this inordinate expectation. Even when Marx died the Socialist movement in England was a tiny handful of people, as it was even ten years later; but his modern disciples have fifty years' experience of an actual working-class political movement to study and account for. What was a venial error in Marx becomes an unforgivable blunder in the Marxist. And the blunder is elementary. If Marxism gives, as it claims to do, a complete account of the forces making for change in capitalist society, then there are two, and only two, possibilities of social revolution. One is the instinctive uprising of the proletariat that is excluded from bourgeois society; the other the conversion of the bourgeoisified proletariat to Marxist Socialism. There is no room for any possibility between these two, on Marx's theory. If there is, in fact, a possibility between these two (as there well may be), Marxism will have to undergo a revolutionary change in order to be able

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to describe or define it. The expedient adopted by modern Marxism to avoid this necessity is to import Marx-Leninism from Russia. It is an evasion of the whole problem. The dogma has failed; therefore we will have the dogma in a new ultra-dogmatic form.

In this form of the Marxist dogma, there is no possibility of a transitional phase between bourgeois society and a socialist society, except 'the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat': which is again an evasion of the problem. For the period of transition (which the Socialist under democracy knows, not by theory, but by experience) is one in which the working class neither is revolutionary nor desires to dictate. That is the actual condition of the working-class movement under democracy. To ignore this reality, or to escape from it by saying that the day will come when the working class will be revolutionary and will make up its mind to dictate, is daydream or day-nightmare. It creates the impression that the Socialist who dreams in this fashion desires dictatorship for its own sake, and not at all because of the social justice it may, or may not, bring to pass.

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The root-cause of this perversity is the failure of Marx to furnish his disciples with any categories in which they can think the reality of what they call 'capitalist democracy'. They have only two categories bequeathed them by Marx: one is bourgeois society,

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the other socialist society. (Unless we include as the third: 'the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'. But to include it would hardly be fair to Marx.) A society of which the political system is representative democracy, based on the universal adult franchise, cannot be comprehended in either of these categories. It is not a bourgeois society; neither is it a socialist society: yet it exists. It happens indeed to be the society in which we live. Nevertheless, according to Marxism, it is an illusion, a non-*ens*, an *Unding*.

We have seen how Marx evaded the point in *The Communist Manifesto*: in which the achievement of democracy by the proletariat was represented as identical with the establishment of the proletariat as 'the ruling class'. We have seen how he evaded it in his comparison of French 'political idealism' with German political incapacity. We have seen how he evaded it by refusing to inquire deeper into the implications of his own admission that the political illusion, cherished by the people of France and England, was nearer to the reality than the religious illusion, in which Germany excelled. But we look in vain for any anticipatory description of the society in which we actually live to-day.

This evasion was, we repeat, very natural for Marx. The society in which we live did not exist in his day. The social state, or the semi-socialized state, had only begun to develop in England at his death. But he saw clearly enough, from the economic point of view, the privileged position which our relative capitalist monopoly had given and would give the English

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working class, and he might have anticipated some at least of the political and moral problems which lay in wait for a socialist movement in such a country when it had achieved complete democracy. Unfortunately, the very clarity with which he perceived the economic structure of society obscured his vision of the political structure of society. The very profundity of his revolutionary insight that 'the human essence' was 'the ensemble of social relations' made it difficult for him to attach any abiding reality to the individual man.

Was the individual person real, or not, for Marx? It is inordinately hard to say. Strictly, the answer — according to Marx — is that the individual person becomes real only at the moment that he becomes aware of his own unreality. That is, for the generality, a very recondite, even an absurd, doctrine. It is a recondite doctrine, though not an absurd one: it is a religious doctrine, to be precise, a Christian doctrine, in an extreme form — a form indeed so extreme that unless it is humanized by Christianity itself it becomes intolerable to the human consciousness. But in any case this doctrine of the regeneration of the individual can be conceived as effective only in a tiny *élite* of the working-class movement — the saints of this secular Church militant; it has no relevance to the proletariat as a whole. That is a revolutionary 'mass', a unitary segment (so to speak) of the social collective, revolutionary therefore only at the level of unconsciousness, when it is impelled by primary life-instinct to a revolutionary destruction of a social order controlled by the

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rights of property. As far as the proletariat is concerned, the Marxist doctrine is a doctrine of revolution without revolutionaries.

This intrinsic weakness Marx concealed from himself by his equivocal use of the adjective 'revolutionary'. The proletarian 'mass' is revolutionary in regard to the existing social order in an entirely different sense from that in which the converted Marxist is revolutionary: the former is negatively revolutionary, blindly raging against the unjust and intolerable social order; but the latter has a clear conception of the basis of the new social order to be established. Hence Marx assigned a cathartic and regenerative function to the revolution itself. 'Revolution is not only necessary because the ruling class can be overthrown in no other way, but also because only in a revolution can the overthrowing class shake itself clean of the old muck and be free to occupy itself in laying the foundations of a new society'.¹ That is to say, in the process of the revolution itself, occurs a moral rebirth of the proletarian mass — a mass-regeneration.

Once again, it is to be regretted that Marx did not enter more deeply into the psychology implied in all this; but, taken merely at its face value, it is (we think) a valuable *aperçu* into the nature of creative revolution. Moreover, it may fairly be said that the Russian Revolution fulfilled this pattern. But Marx, as we have seen, was anticipating a democratic revolution, or at any rate a socialist revolution of which the first phase was the conquest of democracy. The problem he is avoiding is the crucial problem whether, when

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democracy is achieved, the notion of the revolutionary 'mass' remains applicable at all. Consider, for instance, his characteristic dictum urged against the young-Hegelian philosophic radicals, that Communism was not a theory or an ideal, but the actual working-class movement.

Communism is for us not a *condition* which has to be established, not an *ideal* towards which reality must direct itself. We call Communism the *actual* movement which abolishes the present condition.

The equivocation is obvious. What if 'the actual movement' does not 'abolish the present condition', nor seek to abolish it? Or, more pertinently, at what point, in the timid and tentative 'socialization' of a democratic society, is 'the present condition' changed so essentially that it is virtually abolished?

Behind the ambiguity is the axiom that the working class is always revolutionary as a class: the working class is inherently revolutionary. If that were so, then it would indeed be sufficient that the Socialist should identify himself with the 'working-class' movement. But if the effect of democracy is to make the working class no longer revolutionary as a class, what is the Socialist to do then?

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Again the problem of the individual person returns. *Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret.* For the

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problem of democracy and the problem of the individual person are aspects of the same problem. And just as it is inordinately hard to say whether the individual person was a reality or not for Marx, it is inordinately hard to say whether democracy was a reality for him or not. It was, apparently, for him a definite province of the semi-real realm of 'the political illusion', which is, indeed, 'nearer the reality' than the religious illusion, but how near, and what difference it makes by being nearer, Marx forbore to say. That the presence or absence of political democracy does make a vital difference, he admits — so vital that the conquest of democracy is indeed the primary objective of the working-class movement — but he admits this only as it were in a parenthesis which is not suffered to disturb the sweep of his argument. Within the parenthesis he admits that it makes all the difference between having a revolution and not having one.

Hence the very real justification of a penetrating Roman Catholic criticism of the theory of Marxist Communism: 'Our case against Communism is not that it is revolutionary, but that it is not.'¹ The 'revolution' which is promulgated by Marx's theory, regarded as purely intellectual theory (which it purports to be as distinct from religious doctrine), is a 'revolution' which is indeed inevitable, by economic process, and there occurs no point in the process, as it is formulated by Marx, at which any other kind of causation than the power of economic necessity can intervene. All that the individual can do is to attain consciousness, which is merely the knowledge of

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necessity. Thereby, indeed, according to Marx, he attains 'freedom'. But that is nonsense, considered as an intellectual statement.

It becomes a meaningful statement only when it is replaced in its own true order, and understood as a paradox of religious psychology, analogous to 'He that will lose his life the same shall save it', or to Blake's 'We, in our Selves, are nothing'. It is by a painful passing beyond the illusion that the individual self, or the natural man in us, is real, that we become veritably real. As an attempt to state this spiritual or psychological truth in a form directly relevant to creative political action in a modern industrial society Marx's statement has the startling validity of a religious paradox. Not that we suggest an identity between Marx's statement and the two religious utterances we have quoted. No Christian thinker could admit that the essence (*Wesen*) of man was the ensemble of social relations: but, on the other hand, no Christian thinker would have difficulty in admitting that the essence of man was of an entirely different order from the individual of whom common sense is conscious, who is none other than the natural man; and, secondly, no Christian thinker *should* have any difficulty in receiving the revelation of Marx: that man in a modern industrial society is almost wholly surrendered to the demonyry of economic processes of which he is ignorant and which he makes no serious attempt to control.

The peculiarity of Marx's religious psychology and anthropology is that he seeks the transcendent in the social and economic collective — but not in the existing

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social and economic collective. The existing collective is not transcendent for Marx. It would, indeed, be more nearly just to his thought to say that the discovery of the extent to which one is involved in the existing collective is a discovery not of one's reality but of one's unreality. That involves the perception that we can become real, or good, only when the collective becomes real or good. The transcendent therefore is not the existing collective, but the *transformed* collective. Marx's thought is Jewish through and through — eschatological and apocalyptic: the Kingdom of God being the transformed collective. The necessity, by knowing which the individual becomes free, is the dynamic necessity discerned by prophetic vision as existing in the substance of the capitalist collective, whereby the false collective — 'this world' — will be metamorphosed into the true collective — 'the Kingdom of God'.

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At the heart of Marxism thus lies a religious paradox; but that is precisely how, according to Marx, and still more according to the Marx-Leninists, Marxism must not be regarded.⁹ But if it is not so regarded, the Marxist doctrine of revolution ceases to be dynamic at all. If it is dynamic, it is dynamic in spite of itself; and it is absurd that a doctrine which claims to represent the highest possible achievement of the individual consciousness within bourgeois society should leave whatever dynamic it possesses to be

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introduced surreptitiously and as it were by miracle: either massively, in the form of a 'political idealism', a 'generous breadth of soul', which occurs as an inexplicable national idiosyncrasy and is inspired by 'the political illusion'; or individually, in the form of a recondite 'religious' conversion, by which the individual achieves individuality and freedom at the moment that he recognizes that his individuality and his freedom do not exist. It is no part of our argument to deny that this latter is, or may be, a genuine and effective kind of religious conversion, issuing in a self-dedication of the individual to the furtherance of a purpose in history discerned by the imagination; but we must pronounce it fantastic that Marxism should refuse to recognize the nature of its own dynamic.

Fantastic, and futile. For without this knowledge of the nature of its own dynamic Marxism degenerates into one of two things, both of which are undesirable. Either it becomes a doctrine by which men are convinced of their own unreality, and their own inefficacy in trying to 'change the world', as in fact many Marxists in many countries (particularly in Germany) have been convinced. Or it becomes a doctrine by which men become at one and the same moment 'scientific' revolutionaries, and completely ignorant of the motives by which they are in fact driven. They strain after self-transcendence in the solemn conviction that self-transcendence is impossible; they make a stern moral effort to assure men that there is no morality, and with the zeal of religion ingeminate that religion is a lie. It is no wonder that National Socialism

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finds its opportunity in the moral confusion thus created.

It may be said that such things have happened before and will happen again, and that by such means the 'socialist' revolution was actually achieved in Russia. It is indeed true that by these means the Russian Revolution was turned into quasi-socialist channels; but the more relevant truth is that a political revolution had occurred in Russia, before the Bolsheviks intervened, and that a mighty political revolution would have happened there even if the Bolsheviks had never been heard of. The political revolution of Russia was an accomplished fact long before Lenin arrived in Petrograd.

What the Democratic Socialist needs is not a creed that will enable him to convert existing or probable political revolution into quasi-socialist revolution; but one that will enable him to help towards a social revolution where no probability of political revolution exists. And this, which is his real problem, is ignored, first silently by Marx himself and then elaborately and deliberately by Marx-Leninism. Whereas Marxism would have been compelled, if left to itself, either to die of its own political irrelevance, or to be transformed in the effort of grappling with the reality of the problem of democracy into a movement of religious socialism, Marx-Leninism has raised this irrelevance to the dignity not merely of an orthodoxy, which would have been bad enough, but to that of an orthodoxy with an Empire to back it, which is pernicious.

By adhering to this alien orthodoxy, men cut them-

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selves off from the tradition and reality of their own country. Their ignorance of the religious nature of the doctrine which they profess, and which they cannot really follow except religiously, has its immediate political consequences. They entirely misconceive the problem of political democracy. Marx also did not foresee the problem of modern democracy, but he had excuses. It did not yet exist; and there was a sacred fury in the eagerness of his imaginative vision which overleapt the period of democracy. But the modern Marx-Leninist has neither of these excuses. For him, democracy is merely a sham; he has lost all instinctive response to the fact that democracy was achieved in this country by an effort which lasted for two centuries and a half. It *means* nothing to him. So that he can pass from the slogan: 'Democracy is a sham!' to the slogan 'Defend Democracy!' without a twinge of conscience. If the former cry had had meaning, the latter can have none. The truth seems to be that democracy itself is meaningless to him.

Democracy has a very real meaning; and a democracy is a stubborn reality. First and foremost, it is the form of government which (mistakenly or not) asserts the worth and validity of the individual man, and that the true end of society to secure to him the maximum of responsible freedom. That is the rationale of complete political democracy. Hence derives, immediately, the inordinate difficulty of thinking democracy in Marxist categories. If the individual man is an illusion in capitalist society and his freedom a mirage, how can a form of government

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which is based on the assertion of his worth and validity as an individual, and the desirability of his responsible freedom, be other than an aggravated and corporate illusion?

The cause of this strange difficulty is ultimately Marx's failure to define or describe the sphere of the political. It is for him a world of illusion, which is yet nearer to the reality than other forms of illusion, and in particular, nearer to reality than the religious illusion. But what is the *meaning* of saying that, as between two illusions, one is nearer to reality than another? In what does the superiority of the political illusion over the religious illusion consist? There can only be one answer, on Marx's principles. The superiority of the political illusion over the religious illusion must consist in its superior power to change the world. Therefore, political power does change the world. Thus, the first step in the workers' revolution, according to *The Communist Manifesto*, is for the workers 'to conquer democracy', which is to conquer political power; then they have acquired the power to change society.

Marxism tells them for what purposes to use their political power when they have acquired it. But how do they acquire political power? By achieving democracy. But how do they achieve democracy? By telling those who possess political power that they propose to establish themselves, the workers, as the ruling class? To such a challenge there would, and could be, no answer save civil war. And no complete democracy has ever been achieved by such a threat. Complete democracy is always established in the name

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and in the interest of society as a whole. The claim is made that those who are excluded from the political society should be received into it on the ground of their common humanity; and that each adult individual member of society has the right — which is promulgated as self-evident — to an equal share in the political power of the society. The worker claims, and achieves, democracy not as a worker, but as a man.

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Now it may be said — and probably Marx would have said — that this is illusion: that the common humanity on which the worker based his claim to political equality did not exist. (Marx, let us remember, is categorical on precisely this point: the common humanity on which the worker striving for democracy bases his claim is precisely ‘the human essence’, which he says does not dwell within the individual, but is ‘the ensemble of social relations’.) He would say, moreover, that however much the worker might claim democracy as Man, he did not achieve it as Man. He achieved it as worker, by his power as worker to paralyse the ‘life-production’ of the country by withdrawing his labour. But this only evades the problem at one level to encounter it, undiminished and unsolved, at a slightly different level. What causes the individual worker to threaten to withdraw his labour from the social process of ‘life-production’ on which he

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himself immediately depends, in order to achieve democracy? Somewhere, somehow, personal decisions, moral decisions — and self-sacrificial decisions — have to be taken. And the conscious motive of the worker in taking such a decision for such a cause as democracy is his respect for his own dignity as a Man. No matter how sedulously you seek to exclude the moral motive from the revolutionary process of history, you are compelled to bring it in again — if only as Descartes brought God into his system of universal mechanics, *pour lui donner une chiquenaude* — to start the thing going.

Furthermore, this moral ‘illusion’ that rights are due to man as Man is not only necessary to the worker striving for the political equality of democracy, but is equally necessary in order to attract support to the workers’ political struggle from the privileged classes. Is it really to be believed that the workers’ political struggle is supported only by those members of the politically privileged bourgeoisie who have achieved ‘a theoretical understanding of the historical movement as a whole’ in the Marxist sense? It is true neither of the present nor the past. The workers have been supported by those who believed in the dignity and rights of Man. The very phrase, ‘the rights of Man’, is not only precious in revolutionary history; but even to-day is far more potent to move men to revolutionary action than anything the Marxist can utter, without ceasing, in the utterance, to be a Marxist. Without the conception and the conviction of the ‘rights of Man’, — a conception that is democratic and Christian

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— the movement for social revolution would be paralysed.

Hence the element of fallacy in the Marxist conception that the working class achieves complete democracy as an economic *class*. It does not.⁴ It is much nearer the truth to say that the bourgeois class achieves bourgeois democracy as an economic class: and bourgeois democracy is a pseudo-democracy, because it confines political rights and political power to the owners of property. The admission of the propertyless man to an equality of political right and political power with the man of property means, and is, the replacement of sham democracy by real democracy; and real democracy is won by the workers not as workers, but as men.

It is only after that point that the possibility of effective political organization of the workers as a class arises; and the organization is effective only in so far as its demands are in accord with the moral principles already established by the achievement of democracy itself. From their established claim to an equal share of the control of society as *men*, they advance to the claim to an equal share of the advantages of society as *men*. It is their natural way of advance, nor can they effectively advance by any other. It is no use their saying: ‘We will replace the existing ruling class by ourselves as the ruling class’: the workers are already the ruling class. Do they not, even in Great Britain to-day, rule through the National Government? Who put the National Government in power, but the workers?

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For the only definition of a worker that Marxism can admit is one who contributes to the 'life-production' of the nation. All who directly and necessarily participate in the productive processes of society, whether manually or administratively, whether the commodities produced are primary or secondary or tertiary 'necessities', are workers, whether they receive 30s. or £30 a week, whether they vote National, or Labour, or Communist, or Fascist. And who can deny that the workers are the ruling class of England? That they do not use their political power to make a social revolution is nobody's fault but their own.⁶ But they will not make a social revolution until they believe that a social revolution is possible, and so desirable that it is worth making great sacrifices to achieve it.

There are not many who believe a social revolution is desirable; fewer still who believe that it is possible. The abolition of private ownership in the means of production is very far from being the conscious goal of the working class. The period of complete democracy can be regarded, realistically, only as a period during which the workers, and others besides, may (or may not) be gradually educated into a sense of the necessity of taking the ownership and control of the most important means of collective production out of private and socially irresponsible hands. Complete political democracy is the system of government which can permit such a process of gradual education into the necessity of radical social and economic change without a revolutionary upheaval.

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Democracy is quite incompatible with dictatorship. Dictatorship, 'in the name of the people', is not democracy. Democracy is not 'the rule of the people', if by the people is meant anything less than the total membership of a democratic society. There are revolutionary moments in history when dictatorship is necessary to social and political progress; but they will not occur under complete democracy. The only kind of dictatorship that can supervene upon complete democracy is dictatorship to abolish democracy. Therefore any socialist in a democratic society who maintains that 'socialist' dictatorship is democratic is merely preparing as thoroughly as he can for the eradication of both democracy and Socialism. I take an example of this dangerous heresy from a book circulated by the Left Book Club.

Democracy, contrary to many illusory views, does not mean freedom of every kind. It means the rule of the people, and this means the suppression of the enemies of the people. Democracy, therefore, is also dictatorship so far as concerns those who reject the decisions of the people.⁶

Nobody imagines that democracy means freedom of every kind; that is known as anarchy. But democracy is based on a definite principle. It is entirely opposed to the suppression of minorities, and of minority opinion. For democracy does not recognize the existence of any other sovereign 'people' than its own total

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membership. Minorities therefore, and the opinions of minorities, are regarded as valuable even though they may have no direct and immediate effect on the actions of the State: they perform a critical function which is necessary if one part of the people is to act as sovereign, and yet in so acting is to represent the whole: which is the essence of democracy. If the minority is suppressed or silenced, democracy ceases to exist; it becomes dictatorship — whether proletarian or totalitarian, working class or middle class, makes no odds, so far as democracy is concerned.

It is evident then that democracy is a delicate organization of society, which cannot compete in efficiency of mechanical action with a society under a dictatorship. Such a dictatorial society is often said to be superior in unity: we may admit that that is true, provided that we clearly realize that the unity in question is uniformity. Superior uniformity is an advantage in so far as the aims of the society are competitive, — hence, particularly, in the supreme form of competition which is war. Democracy is, admittedly, an inferior form of organization for war, because it is based on a higher kind of co-ordination than mass-uniformity.⁷ It is, indeed, the organization of society into a living unity at the level of consciousness and responsible freedom; it lives by the open expression of conflicts and tensions, after the fashion of a conscious Man, and seeks the maximum of freedom for the individual that is compatible with the existence of the social whole.

Thus the continued existence of a democracy, as a

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democracy, depends upon an instinctive reluctance in the majority to push things too fast or too far. The government for the time being, although it directly represents only the major part of the nation, also represents the nation as a whole, and needs to be conscious of that function. Therefore, the range of awareness and sensitivity in a democratic government is much greater than that of a dictatorial government; and its capacity for swift action much less. Democracies to dictatorships are as Hamlet to Fortinbras: hence, in part, the prophetic significance of 'Hamlet' for the period of which representative democracy is the political culmination. Since the responsibility of power in a democracy is a responsibility towards the Society as a whole, considered not as a conglomeration of economic classes, nor as a biological race, but as a community of free and responsible individuals, if that power is exercised with a sense of responsibility to a class merely, democracy is in peril.

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The realm of politics is the realm wherein society is consciously changed. The realm of economics is that within which society changes unconsciously. To bring the realm of economics within the realm of politics is the true aim of the Socialist; not to explode the realm of politics as illusory. In the realm of politics all the real decisions of men in society are taken; and if the decisions are not taken in that realm they are not

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taken by men at all, but by Nature. The realm of politics is a realm of freedom: and no matter how fully the political consciousness of the society becomes aware of the compulsions of economic necessity, the realm of politics will not cease in any degree to be the realm of freedom. For when economic necessity becomes conscious, it ceases to be necessity. 'Freedom is knowledge of necessity', in this sense indeed. If men were conscious of the social necessity under which they labour and are heavy-laden in existing society, and under the present abuse of the productive power of industry, they might perfectly well choose deliberately to return, in certain provinces, to simpler methods of life-production. To eliminate the machine entirely would certainly be unpractical folly; to eliminate some of it might be the height of social wisdom. But either of those acts is *possible*. Man's methods of 'life-production' control him only so long as he does not know that they control him. The moment he — that is the majority of a democratic society — knows how they control him he is free to loosen and adjust their control.

Because it is true that the way to make politics real is to bring economics entirely within its scope, it is fantastic to imagine that politics must be abolished in the process. Politics becomes coextensive with the consciousness of society as a whole so soon as complete political democracy is established. If politics does not adjust itself rapidly enough to the unconscious necessity of economics, assuredly there will be disaster. But the meaning of the disaster will be simply that the con-

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sciousness of Man-in-Society could not achieve knowledge of the body of Man-in-Society. That failure will be spelled in actual experience as mass-murder, plague, pestilence, famine, barbarism. It may be that through this disaster salvation will come — for the remnant that is saved. But it is a superstition to believe that salvation will come by 'proletarian revolution' after disaster; it is likewise a superstition to believe that it will come by 'proletarian revolution' before disaster, unless we mean by 'proletarian revolution' something quite different from what those who are addicted to the phrase do mean. The only revolution that will save society is the revolutionary adjustment of the consciousness of Man-in-Society to its own methods of 'life-production'.

Unless that adjustment is effected in the sphere of the political, it will be effected only by Nature — that is to say by biological catastrophe, stupendous and appalling. This revolutionary adjustment by nature is the real revolution by economic *necessity*: and it is disastrous. 'Proletarian revolution' under democracy is only a comfortable and specious name for the disaster itself. God help the proletarians if it ever comes! The revolutionary adjustment, if it is to be human and life-giving, and not natural and deathly, must come through the consciousness of Man-in-Society, which is the political. When a democratic society is achieved the faculty of consciousness is achieved by its every member: then every member partakes in the consciousness of society, and every member shares the responsibility for the failures of that consciousness. To

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anticipate violent revolution is to anticipate the disruption of that consciousness; to disrupt that consciousness is death to society. To deny the supremacy of the 'political', to cease clearly to maintain its pre-eminence, is to seek revolution not into a human society, but a sub-human one.

CHAPTER X

THE WORKING CLASS IN DEMOCRACY

BUT what can be done if the consciousness of Man-in-Society cannot attain knowledge of the body of Man-in-Society? If politics remains ignorant of economics, what can men do to avert disaster? It is foolishness to preach violent revolution, or to advocate a form of revolution which can be achieved or defended only by civil war; for that is the disaster. International war is the disaster, too. They are both alike forms of the same disaster. Be revolutionary we must, or there is disaster; disrupt the consciousness of society by violence we must not, for that is the disaster. Both imperatives are peremptory. There is only one way: it may seem Utopian. Still, it is the only way. That way is through revolutionary moral and religious change in the individual citizen of democracy. If that is impossible, then the advance to a socialist society is impossible.

In order to understand this we must examine more closely the nature of the change that overtakes the proletariat when, by the achievement of complete democracy, in the formal sense (that is, the election of a sovereign representative by universal adult franchise), it enters into the bourgeois political society. Between the pre-democratic proletariat and the post-democratic working class, there is a difference in kind. It is a

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difference which Marxist theory is unable to register or define; but the incapacity of Marxism to detect or define this change does not diminish its objective reality.

In the primitive capitalist society of Marx's original vision the proletariat was a power which made for righteousness. If, by the familiar analogy, we conceive this primitive capitalist society as a person and imagine it as self-conscious, the proletariat would be the force within it to which the phrase of Matthew Arnold would literally apply: 'a power in ourselves, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness'. The proletariat was within capitalist society, considered as an economic collective; yet it was outside capitalist society, considered as a political society. It made for righteousness because by its simple striving for bare physical subsistence it became disruptive of an iniquitous system of relations of production. This system was iniquitous: because a right which had accrued to property because it accepted social obligations, in a relatively stable system of life-production, was maintained under a totally different and revolutionary system of life-production, in which the social obligations of property could not be enforced in the old way.

Thus the proletariat was inside the collective and outside the society. Capitalist society accepted no responsibility for the proletariat. In order to compel capitalist society to take social responsibility for the proletariat, the proletariat struggled to achieve the democratic franchise: that is, to achieve its own re-entry into the society from which it had been thrust

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out. In this effort, the proletariat embodied a force of good. It was a power making for righteousness — for the humanization of the dehumanized economic collective.

It is not to be thought that the struggle for the democratic franchise was the only way to humanize the economic collective. It was theoretically possible that the owners of property should of their own free-will, directly resume, in a new and appropriate form, that obligation towards the proletarian from which property had emancipated itself. But the only practical means of doing this (since a direct reversion to feudal and fiduciary ‘ownership’ was impossible) was by enlarging the powers of the state, so that it could exact, by means of taxation, the performance of its social obligation from property, and by means of new administrative organs (the ‘social state’) give the benefit of that taxation to the proletariat. But, in England anyhow, the property-owners had emancipated themselves completely from the social state in its more primitive form — namely, benevolent absolutist monarchy. It was psychologically extremely difficult for the members of this independent aristocracy to re-create even a rudimentary form of the social state directly, for that would have involved increasing ‘the power of the Crown’, of which they were intensely jealous. The ‘political’ tradition of England, whereby the possession of the franchise was the recognized means to membership of the national society, prevented any such solution to the problem as was enforced by Bismarck in Germany. His social legislation from

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above re-incorporated the proletariat into society more swiftly, but less thoroughly — let us even say, less morally — than the roundabout political method of the English. The incorporation of the proletariat into an authoritarian society is, in fact, much easier than its incorporation into a democratic society, because an authoritarian society — monarchical-absolutist, Fascist or Communist — is a much simpler form of society than the democratic; it is a society in which the diffusion of responsible consciousness is reduced to a minimum. But it is important to realize, in view of modern totalitarian developments, that democracy is not the only way of incorporating the proletariat into society; though it is the only way of incorporating it into a society which has a chance of evolving peacefully into a socialist society. It is not an accident that in the country of Marx, whose conception of the ‘political’ was so vague and deficient, the anti-democratic way of incorporating the proletariat into society has established itself.

Indeed, it seems necessary to point out that, although on a short view it is true that the dictatorial ‘socialism’ of Russia was one of the potent factors in preparing the way for the dictatorial National-Socialism of Germany, it is also true that Marx’s inability to understand democracy except outwardly and schematically was characteristically German. National-Socialism rather than democratic socialism, it might be said, was likely to be the actually triumphant form of socialism in a country where Marx’s non-political theory of socialism was the socialist orthodoxy.¹

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The significance of the incorporation of the proletariat into capitalist society by means of democracy, and not by authoritarian social legislation, can be understood only if the process is regarded as the emergence of the proletariat from a condition of minority and tutelage into one of responsibility and freedom. We have described it as the acquisition of 'consciousness' by the proletariat. In the social macrocosm, the acquisition of consciousness consists in the acquisition of political power by the member of the collective, in the right of his human individuality. The achievement of the democratic franchise by the proletariat marks the permeation of the economic collective of capitalism by consciousness on the social scale. These statements are metaphorical; nevertheless they contain a truth which can be expressed in no other way.

'Consciousness' has two distinct meanings: first, it is a faculty which distinguishes man from the animal. To say that 'man is conscious' is, in this sense, the equivalent of the dictum that 'man is a rational animal'. The same ambiguity which attaches to the word 'rational' (whereby it means either that one possesses the faculty of 'rationality', or that one makes a right use of that faculty) attaches also to the word 'consciousness': for that also denotes, besides the possession of the mere faculty, the right use of it. This second sense gives its meaning to the rather hackneyed socialist phrase: 'the conscious proletariat'.

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When we say that the acquisition of political power by the members of the proletariat, in virtue of their existence as individual persons, is the acquisition of consciousness, on the social scale, by the proletariat, we are using 'consciousness' in the sense of faculty. At that moment and by that acquisition, the proletariat tastes of the tree of knowledge; it knows Good and Evil. In other words, it becomes responsible. And again the word 'responsible' is equivocal in precisely the same way as 'conscious' or 'rational'. To be in the mere condition of responsibility is a different thing from behaving as one who acknowledges the burden of responsibility. It is the ignoring of the hiatus between these two different conditions of 'consciousness' or 'rationality' or 'responsibility' in the individual and in society which is the cause of the irrelevance, and worse, of so much modern political thought.

To employ our former language, modern Marxism has made the blunder of supposing that the power making for righteousness which was embodied in the proletariat because it was unconscious, and while it was unconscious, is automatically transferred to, and maintained in, the proletariat when it reaches the condition of consciousness. But, as Hamlet said, 'Conscience' — which meant consciousness — 'makes cowards of us all.' That is just as true of the proletariat as a class, as it is of individual men. It has lost innocence; it was desirable and just that it should lose innocence, and achieve consciousness and responsibility. But it was only so long as that achievement of consciousness and responsibility was denied to it,

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that the proletariat was, merely by virtue of being a proletariat, good, or a power making for righteousness. The disruption with which it threatened an unjust system of relations of production by its simple struggle for subsistence was just; and the proletariat 'naturally good'. But so soon as consciousness and responsibility had been achieved, this natural righteousness of the proletariat disappeared. The proletariat ceased therefore to be a proletariat; if it retained the name, it had lost the virtue. It ceased to be a force inherently, righteously, and creatively disruptive of capitalist society, which refused it the access to consciousness and responsibility.

All this is, no doubt, a rather complicated way of explaining that democracy is a real condition in the social macrocosm, and that scientific socialists are like to find it a disconcerting one. Democracy in respect to a proletariat which has not yet achieved it — unrealized democracy — is the focus and ideal of natural proletarian righteousness; but once it has been achieved — realized democracy — it destroys natural proletarian righteousness. This is in accord with the law of human growth. If we are morally developed persons, we know this truth in ourselves as individuals. Unless every new freedom becomes a new responsibility, we are enslaved by our freedoms. So the proletariat, having achieved the consciousness and freedom of democracy, ceases to have the power and virtue which it had as a proletariat in struggling for that consciousness and freedom. To gather the paradox into a single sentence, the proletariat, which is a

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dynamic class while it struggles to reach the condition of responsibility, can remain a dynamic class only by behaving responsibly. But that is the demand on every other class in democracy; or rather, any other class in democracy can become dynamic on the same terms. Therefore, the proletariat is not dynamic as a class any more. It is now, in respect of inherent virtue and inherent power, strictly on a level with all other classes of society. The economic aspect of this truth, which we are considering under its ethical aspect, is that the proletariat cannot destroy post-capitalist society now without destroying itself in the process.

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There is only one way for the proletariat, which we must henceforward call the working class, to move creatively, now that it has ceased unconsciously or naturally to embody the good. It must now consciously strive for the good. It is vital, if this effort is to be effective, that the working class should not entertain, or be encouraged in, the illusion that in its unconsciousness it embodies the good as against other classes in society. It can be good, in this new order of conscious and responsible life, only by realizing that the good is no more in its keeping as a class, than it is in that of any other class of society. The good which it must now strive for, if it is to remain dynamic, is a good that is transcendent in respect to all classes. In other words, the working class, in post-capitalist society *cannot*

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achieve a social revolution by pursuing its class-interests.

Another way of saying this thing is to say that the working class, by pursuing its true interests as a class, must pursue the interests of society as a whole. That is, indeed, an original axiom of Marx concerning the proletariat. But the meaning of that dictum as applied to the primitive proletariat, and its meaning as applied to the working class under democracy, are quite different. For the primitive proletariat does not consciously pursue its interests as a class but is engaged in a sheer struggle for life. As we have seen in its struggle for bare physical existence, it destroys the institution of property without human obligation; and by so doing it saves society as a whole. It establishes the individual and human person alone as the source of political power; it establishes the right of the human individual to subsistence as an individual person. Beyond that, the proletariat as a class *cannot go*. And in reaching this point it ceases to be a proletariat.

It ceases at the same moment to be able to pursue its interests as a class. It ceases to be naturally homogeneous. Whereas the proletariat is naturally homogeneous in regard to the unrealized aim of political equality, and the unrealized aim of a bare subsistence secured to the individual person, as such, by society; it ceases to be naturally homogeneous in regard to any aim beyond that. Therefore, natural proletarian political unity is a superstition when predicated of the working class of a democratic society — that is, if working-class political unity is conceived, as it

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invariably is by the Marxist, as something which automatically makes for social revolution. Hence his bewilderment when he discovers that, in spite of all his appeals to the working class to be conscious of its interests as a class, working class political unity for social revolution is not attained. He cannot admit the paradox of reality: which is that, on the one hand, in so far as working-class political unity is attained, it is not revolutionary in intention, and on the other hand, that in so far as there is a 'proletarian' political party basing itself on an appeal to the working class to be conscious of its class-interests alone, it is a party disruptive of working-class political unity.

That phenomenon, by which current Marxism is so disconcerted that it ignores it, is capable of explanation in strict Marxist terms: provided we do use them strictly. It is not capable of explanation by the pseudo-science of Marx-Leninism, which is based on the equivocation of calling that a Marxist proletariat, which never in any respect resembled a Marxist proletariat — namely, the proportionately infinitesimal class of industrial workers in Russia at the time of the revolution. The sacrosanctity of Marx-Leninism to the modern Marxist has induced in him an attitude of mind and soul that can look honestly neither at Marxism nor at reality. He dare not look squarely at the phenomenon, and what he is compelled to see of it he cannot explain by his pseudo-science. Thus theoretical socialism takes refuge in the pseudo-science of Marx-Leninism, in order to escape from admitting the necessity of its own inward revolution.

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§

A little while back, we put forward two apparently contradictory propositions, saying that they were identical. One was: that the working class in post-capitalist society cannot achieve a social revolution by pursuing its class-interest; the other was: that the working class by *really* pursuing its interests as a class, must pursue the interests of society as a whole. Since it is common ground that the interest of society as a whole to-day depends on the achievement of a social revolution of some sort, these propositions, which were declared to be identical, are superficially contradictory. The explanation of the identity and the contradiction is to be sought in the hiatus which exists between the apparent pursuit of its class-interests by the working class, and the *real* pursuit of those interests: and that is the hiatus, which is continually recurring in different forms, and which the Marxist is compelled by his theory to ignore, between nature and super-nature, or between instinctive and conscious action. The Marxist will proclaim that the working class has now consciously to pursue its class-interests; but he will not pause to inquire what is involved in that change from unconscious to conscious action in the actual experience of any individual member of the working class. He cannot pause to inquire, because he has no categories in which to think this order of reality. The continued existence of the natural homogeneity of the working class is axiomatic with him, although it is a superstition.

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This is not to deny that there does still exist some natural homogeneity among the working class even in modern society. We do deny that this 'natural' homogeneity has, or can have, any revolutionary intention or significance. In order to achieve a homogeneity which has revolutionary significance or intention, the working class has now to transcend its own interests — because it has to *achieve* its own unity as a class. We are nearing the heart of the paradox on the political level — the paradox created by the proletarian acquisition of social consciousness which, as we said, is the acquisition of political power by the individual person as such. Now, the individual member of the working class is valid as an individual person; he actually possesses the utmost validity that extant society can bestow upon him. He is become an equal part of the responsible consciousness of society. He cannot, without danger of manifest self-deception, set himself over against society any more. He is an equal part of society. Society can give him no more. He has now consciously to will, as a responsible member of society, its betterment. For extant society is now the resultant of the choices made by the responsible wills of all its individual members.

Beyond that controlling form, society simply cannot pass without degradation. That is, in respect to the highest standard of human values, a final *form* of political society. It is the equivalent in the social macrocosm of the attainment of years of discretion in the individual microcosm. To go back from that form of society is to go back on consciousness itself. That

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does not imply that it is impossible that such a society may be 'compelled' to go back on the consciousness it has achieved. To-day it is increasingly manifest that it is only too possible. But we must be intently on our guard against the suggestion that such a surrender is other than a moral retrogression; and we must examine what is in fact implied in such 'compulsion' — an inquiry which we must reserve for a later stage. Meanwhile, we may hold fast to the word of Hamlet, the prophetic figure of our era — that consciousness 'makes cowards of us all'. To manifest the courage of consciousness may be beyond the moral capacity of any democracy in the world to-day.

In order to continue to go forward, there is only one way for a society which has achieved consciousness by means of democracy: society itself must consciously and responsibly will the good. But the good, in relation to such a society — what is it? First, real social justice, that is, the closest possible approximation to equality of opportunity to lead the good life for all its members. That is the ethical demand of Socialism. Secondly, this same demand, in its economic form, is the demand for the supersession of socially irresponsible ownership and control of the instruments of collective production. Nevertheless, prior to these is an end more fundamental still: and we must say that the good in relation to such a society, — a good which has to be consciously and responsibly willed, and not taken for granted, — is its own continued existence as a society which has achieved this 'final' form, — a form whereby society is endowed

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with the power of conscious and peaceful self-transformation.

So we reach a fundamental axiom: that democracy is even more important to Socialism than Socialism itself. If it is true, as Socialists believe, that such a democratic society cannot continue to exist as a democratic society unless it transforms itself into a community of social justice, the inward necessity is able to express itself without catastrophe or upheaval, provided that a majority of its members have the capacity to become conscious of that necessity and to will to be obedient to it. If they have not, then democracy is doomed. It well may be. But we must remember that precisely because democracy is the 'final' form of conscious society, it will be reluctant to take a leap in the dark. The democratic way is, necessarily, the way of gradual reform and amelioration. A sudden economic and social *revolution* is really inconceivable under democracy. On this level the question that the near future will decide is whether democracy can submit itself quickly or resolutely enough to the necessary conditions, economic and spiritual, of its own continued existence as a democracy.

One thing in the uncertain future seems fairly safe to prophesy: that if the democratic system cracks in Britain it will not be because of any intolerable tension created by the urgency of demands for Socialism by the working class, or the stubbornness of the resistance to it. Those many advanced Socialists who hold it as a fixed article of belief that there will be what Marx called 'a pro-slavery rebellion' on the part

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of the property-owning class in Britain surely mis-judge the actual temper of the nation: in two ways. They greatly exaggerate the possibility of a 'militant' socialist movement in the British working class; and thus they exaggerate, no less, the possibility of anti-democratic action of the propertied class in resistance to the kind of working-class movement that is probable here. Britain will not easily be divided into Reds and anti-Reds, no matter what Marxist inevitability has to say upon the matter. If domestic questions were alone in issue, we might look forward with some confidence to the peaceful evolution which all good men desire.

For the moment let us assume (what is impossible) that our existing post-capitalist democratic society is allowed to evolve in isolation. I believe that the vigorous life of such a society depends upon the gradual establishment of approximate economic equality for all; but I incline to believe that such a society will recognize this when the necessity becomes really urgent. Human nature being what it is, approximate economic equality for all will be willed in the main only by those for whom such equality means an improvement of economic status. In that sense the social revolution depends on the will of the working class. But the actual economic position of the working class is infinitely various — even that of the manual labourers, who form only a section, though perhaps a majority, of the working class, is infinitely various. Infinitely various, therefore, is the effective will, on the natural level, for economic equality: so that, in fact, it becomes dynamic, on

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the natural level, only in the very poorest of the working class, and, in fact, very precariously dynamic even in them, when they are secured from absolute destitution.

Thus the achievement of an effective will for economic equality among the working class, if left to natural operation, is practically impossible. The postman and the policeman with £3 a week live next door to the agricultural labourer with 32s. There is an abyss between them. The ideal of economic equality will not easily make so powerful an appeal to them as the ideal of political equality made to their fathers when they were all equally deprived of the vote. That deprivation their fathers felt, rightly, to be a denial and diminution of their manhood. The denial of economic equality is a very different matter. That can be felt as a denial and diminution of their manhood only by the emergence in them of the conviction that one man is verily as good as another; and to that conviction there are two sides. It is not only the conviction: 'I am as good as he', it is also the conviction: 'He is as good as me'. The former of these convictions without the latter is merely disintegrating. It is the latter which makes for integration and unity.

Furthermore, it must never be forgotten that the working class, on Marxist theory, is not simply the small handful of revolutionary Socialists, nor that portion of the working class which is organized politically and industrially, nor even the larger portion of the working class which votes Labour; but, as we have already insisted, the whole of those who are

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creatively engaged in the 'life-production' of society, whether manually or administratively, whether in the production of necessities or luxuries.

We do not suggest that the absolute unity of this vast 'class' is a necessary pre-condition of social revolution; but something much more nearly approaching that difficult achievement than Communists dream of is necessary. In the light of this necessity, the effective unity of the working class in post-capitalist democracy is palpably a considerable moral achievement. It is not, and cannot be, a natural happening. It involves much conscious self-sacrifice, and much more readiness for it. That is the ethos of revolutionary unity in the working class. The unity of the working class is revolutionary just in so far as it is permeated by a readiness for real self-sacrifice of the parts in the interests of the whole. Without that, the political unity of the working class is superficial, and cannot be revolutionary in intention. It is not so to-day.

But precisely in the measure in which such real unity was achieved the unified working class would posit, not ideally, but concretely, an end transcendent to all classes in post-capitalist society. It would become an analogue and anticipation of that 'classless society' which socialist theory declares to be necessary and socialist faith proclaims to be possible. That is to say that, under democracy, in order to be revolutionary, the working class is compelled to reveal itself as ethically superior to other classes; it is compelled to surpass in itself, and consciously, the individualistic ethos of capitalist society.

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Such a working-class movement alone, in the changed conditions of post-capitalist society, could fulfil the dynamic function which was fulfilled by the 'proletariat' in primitive capitalist society. It would be manifest as serving the highest interests of society as a whole; it would have transformed itself into a part of the body of a new society. The equivocation of Communism which, under the abstractions of 'class-interest' and 'class-struggle', conceals from itself the nature of the revolutionary moral demand made upon the working class itself by political unity for Socialism is, in fact, preparing the way for the fascisization of society. True, it has now verbally retreated on to the 'defence of democracy', but democracy can only be defended by being more fully asserted: that is, by the increasing permeation of society by a practical conviction of the real (which is not the mechanical or mathematical) equality of individual men and women. There *is* a class-struggle; but it can be politically expressed only in the struggle of the actual nucleus of a classless society to emerge. That will not occur, in post-capitalist society, by defending an interest, but by realizing an ideal: and that ideal cannot be the ideal of formal political democracy. For that ideal has been realized already. Neither can that ideal be dictatorial 'Socialism', for that denies democracy. The solution of the dilemma is plain, at any rate to the imagination: the ideal must be the re-assertion of the essential content of the democratic idea in a new order.

CHAPTER XI

REVOLUTIONARY CLASS AND REVOLUTIONARY INDIVIDUALS

THERE is no naturally revolutionary class in post-capitalist democracy. There is only the revolutionary individual. The revolutionary 'class' in capitalist democracy therefore consists of revolutionary individuals. This we believe to be the conclusion forced upon Marxist thinking if it is honestly applied to the conditions of a democratic society. That is to say, the reality of post-capitalist society imposes an intellectual revolution upon Marxism. The proposition that in capitalist democracy there is no revolutionary 'class', but only revolutionary individuals, is a pretty complete denial of Marxism as it is currently understood.

Nevertheless, it is in accord with the truth contained in the original Marxist axiom: that the proletariat is revolutionary in bourgeois society, because it is outside bourgeois society. No class is outside a complete democracy. Therefore the only class that can be revolutionary towards a complete democracy is the class composed of individuals, who put themselves outside it. How do men put themselves outside such a society? They do it, to a certain extent, by going on strike. Then the workers on strike, by withholding their labour, disrupt to the extent of the strike the process of 'life-production' which is necessary to

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society. Nevertheless, in the first place, they do not put themselves outside the political society; and in the second place, even when on strike, they remain within the nexus of the system of life-production in which they have temporarily ceased to function. They are passive instead of active instruments in that nexus, for the time being occupying a position economically analogous to that of the unemployed man on the dole, or the rentier on his dividends.

A truly general strike would indeed paralyse society, and if maintained would kill it; but it would kill the strikers, too. And, in fact, what are called general strikes are never general: there is a tacit agreement that a minimum of essential services shall be maintained. That is necessary, or the workers would be cutting their own throats. Thus even the 'general' strike cannot succeed in putting the workers outside the economic nexus of society; and the 'general' strike is not a revolutionary weapon. Its effectiveness is negative, and limited to the psychological effects produced by a minimization of 'life-production': which, very probably, presses much harder on the poorer folk than the richer. A deliberate and total interruption of the collective life-production of society in time of peace is really unthinkable: because the working class in an industrial society depends more directly than any other on collective life-production. It is moonshine to imagine that, by some prodigy of discipline, the workers could interrupt the collective life-production just long enough to enforce a transference of political power from a democratic govern-

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ment into their own hands and start life-production going again in time to save society from complete collapse. That the working class is in such a position under democracy that it can enforce industrially a revolution which it is not convinced enough to obtain by political means is a superstition; and the attempt would be a miserable failure in time of peace.

§

In time of war the situation is changed; for modern warfare is likely entirely to dislocate the delicate organization of an advanced industrial society. Under such circumstances a general strike may possibly be the lesser of the two evils; and may be justified as a means of preventing society from destroying itself completely. Whether that would involve the capitulation of a democratic society to the enemy is less certain than it seems to many, for it is possible that any movement of this kind would be swiftly contagious, and that in these days, when the people's fear of war is more intense than ever before, an effective strike against war in one country would be the signal for a strike against it in the enemy country also. But while we may hope that this is true, it is no use blinking the fact that the strike against war may involve a temporary surrender. Neither is it just to pretend that the issue is one which can be simply decided, or that it is not bitter to think of democracy capitulating even momentarily to a totalitarian enemy. This, it seems

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to us, is the major moral issue confronting democracy to-day. And the fact that it is raised by any consideration of the significance of the general strike is a concrete instance of how the problems of a socialist movement, under democracy, necessarily emerge as problems of the most advanced and delicate social morality.

For the general strike in time of modern war is in principle indistinguishable from absolute war-resistance. There is no possibility of distinguishing between the two, because in the conditions of modern warfare, the whole nation is organized for war: *all* the productive energies of society are mobilized, first, towards the minimum of life-production necessary to keep the society physically alive (e.g. the provision of food, transport, and physical protection), and, second, towards the production of instruments of death, living or inanimate, for the destruction of the population of the enemy country. Thus there is no real distinction in effective social function between members of a modern society in war. The strike against war is thus theoretically possible to every citizen simultaneously. But that would be a total strike of society not against war, but against itself, which is absurd. And in practice it would be found to be intolerable; for the same moral conscience which commands the strike against war, just as peremptorily and more immediately commands that one should do one's utmost to save the lives of the innocent. It is not in actual fact possible to abstain from helping the helpless and the suffering on the ground that you are pledged to refuse your co-operation with society in war. So that in reality

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the strike against war appears to be restricted to a refusal of combatant military service, and a refusal to manufacture destructive munitions of war.

Such a strike would be effective as a means of stopping war. It would be a combination of a strike of the citizen against a moral abuse of the service he owes society, and a strike of the worker against a moral abuse of his productive powers. But it would have no revolutionary intention and significance beyond the stopping of war: in respect of radical social change its significance would be neutral rather than positive. Its aim would be not to carry society a stage further on its evolution towards social justice, but to preserve from self-destruction a society capable of such an evolution.

On a different level, on a level more nearly corresponding to the instinctive action of the proletariat in pre-democratic society, is the instinctive reluctance of the mass-man in any form of society to take part in modern warfare. This found expression, in the recent crisis of September 1938, in the behaviour of the British Prime Minister: who, as the responsible head of a democratic government, showed himself sensitive, as Herr Hitler was not, to the profound horror of modern warfare which has gradually taken hold of the common man. One may timidly cherish the hope that, owing to the precedent created by Mr. Chamberlain, it has been made distinctly more difficult for the nations to be plunged into international war, without preliminary direct negotiation under circumstances such that the pressure for peace will be

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almost irresistible. One dare not assert that it is probable that we have in this respect entered upon a new phase in European history; but it is at least possible. If it should prove to be true, then war-resistance will cease to have the significance we have ascribed to it here. Since that significance, in any case, is only negative, we may consider the positive implications of our thesis that in post-capitalist democracy there is no revolutionary class but only revolutionary individuals.

§

We have seen that the possibility of the working-class becoming revolutionary in post-capitalist society, by putting itself outside society in a sense analogous to that in which the primitive proletariat was outside society, reduces in fact to a refusal to co-operate in the destructive activities of the society when engaged in totalitarian warfare. Such non-co-operation cannot be peculiar to the working class, because the refusal to make destructive munitions of war is merely a particular case of the refusal of combatant service. And, although it is possible that the working class might appear to act in this matter as a class (if, for example, the relevant Trades Unions acted in a body), still they would not be acting as an economic class, under economic compulsion or with an economic motive; they would be acting as a group of responsible, self-determining individuals, in no way distinct from the

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individuals of any other class who refused combatant service.

The proposition that in post-capitalist democracy there is no revolutionary class, but only revolutionary individuals, accords with and explains the practical stagnation of the socialist movement in post-capitalist democracy. To be a conscious socialist in such a society makes what is intrinsically the same revolutionary demand on the members of every class within it. Thus, there is a practical compulsion upon the working class itself, if it is to achieve a political unity for social revolution, to transcend its own individualisms and its sectionalism. This is not an idealist demand — except in the sense in which under democracy Socialist realism and Socialist idealism are necessarily one; it is imposed, as a practical necessity, on members of the working class, if their organization is to be effective for socialism, that they should become 'members one of another'. They can evade this necessity, only by giving up the dream of being effective for socialism. The mere outward semblance of unity which is conferred by membership, deliberate or automatic, of a Labour party is nugatory in respect of a socialist purpose. The practical working of that form of unity is an endeavour to find the highest common factor amid a multitude of discrepant immediate interests within the Labour movement: which is self-stultifying, and worse, as we see for example in the growing gulf which separates the Trades Unions from the unemployed. That alone — and it is but one example among many — would

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prevent any convinced and effective action towards social revolution. And it is evident to anyone who considers this situation that it must engender a perilous illusionism. For the theoretical socialist objectives of the Labour party are denied by its actions. If this condition and the causes of it were clearly admitted to consciousness, we might look for the beginnings of the inward revolution (a veritable ‘metanoia’) which is required. But so long as the deception is maintained by which a politically united working class, by the fact of its political ‘unity’, is assumed to be automatically moving towards the achievement of socialism, so long will political Labour move automatically in a quite different direction.

§

A powerful contributory cause to this perilous illusionism is the ambiguity of the concept of political ‘unity’. As this is currently conceived, it means no more, when applied to the working class, than it means when applied to their political opponents. There are shades of difference, of course, — for example in the practice by which the Trades Unionist, the industrially organized member of the working class, automatically contributes to the fund of the political Labour movement. But such a difference is not essential; and indeed it may possibly contribute an added element of illusionism to Labour-Socialism, in that it bestows fictitious political consciousness on millions of men

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who have little or none. So that we may fairly say that there is no distinction between the concept of political 'unity' as applied to the working class, and as applied to their opponents. Political 'unity' simply means that rudimentary political organization which is necessary to any political 'party' under democracy.

This is organization on the basis of immediate interests. The basic appeal is: 'It will pay you to vote for us'; and the basic response is 'What are you going to do for me?' That may be good enough for what is called the practical working of democracy. But the acceptance of that as good enough by the working-class political party means a significant interruption in the moral continuity of the process which achieved democracy itself. The dynamic that achieved democracy was, in the main, a dynamic not of interest but of morality and religion.

Interest, of course, played its part. The manufacturers wanted working-class support against the Corn Laws, and for the defeat of the landed interest; and assuredly the working class needed cheap food even more than the manufacturers wanted it. But to argue that the great English democratic and liberal movement of the nineteenth century was merely the outcome of an alliance of interests between the industrial capitalists and the working class, assuming a moralistic or idealistic disguise, is to evade the complexity of reality by gross simplification. The political sphere is precisely that wherein interest and disinterestedness are subtly interwoven. The individualistic ethos of Liberalism was a compound of self-regarding interest

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and a disinterested belief in political equality. Freedom of trade and freedom of speech, economic liberty and political liberty, were parts of a single idea. The statement in *The Communist Manifesto* that 'the ideas of freedom of conscience and freedom of religion merely expressed the dominion of Free Trade within the realm of knowledge' is only a half-truth; for the converse is also true, that 'the idea of Free Trade merely expressed the dominion of freedom of conscience within the realm of economics'. And in historical fact it was the idea of freedom of conscience which actually won the battle by which bourgeois society was established in England.

§

But we are not now concerned with the motives which led a large section of the bourgeoisie to make common cause with the working class in its struggle for democracy; but with the motives of the working class itself. The working man claimed the vote as due to his own manhood; he made the demand that he should be as valid as a person, and become, in his right as a person, a full citizen of society. This was, we say, primarily a moral and religious demand. That it was to the working man's interest to make the demand is not denied; but he would never have dreamed of putting it forward primarily on that ground.¹ The word 'interest', like most other cardinal words in politics, is entirely equivocal. If I am a slave, is it to my

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'interest' to become a free man? It depends on what we mean by 'interest'. If I am a well-fed slave with a reasonably indulgent master, it may be by no means to my material 'interest' to receive my freedom. But if I believe, as many men really do, that man does not live by bread alone, I shall say that it is to my true 'interest' (that is to my interest as a moral and spiritual person) to receive my freedom, even though I suffer materially by the emancipation. So likewise I may decide that to surrender my political freedom, even though I may be recompensed by a great increase of material well-being, is to sacrifice my true spiritual interest for my false material interest. It was in pursuit not of its immediate, but of its true interest, that the working class struggled for democracy.

Man's true interest is to attain the maximum of conscious and responsible freedom, whereby he develops as a person. Such freedom does not involve his emancipation from restraints, but his voluntary acceptance of all the restraints which are necessary to this maximum of conscious and responsible freedom. Political equality in democracy is a necessary form of that maximal conscious freedom, because it is the only means which makes possible a voluntary acceptance of the restraints which are necessary to freedom in society. Belief in democracy, in this sense, as what we have called a final form of society, does not necessarily involve the belief that it is a practicable form of society. It may be practicable in some circumstances, and not in others; in difficult circumstances it may make demands upon its members which

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they are not educated enough to fulfil. For example, a property-owning class may refuse to submit to the will of democracy when it imposes drastic restraints upon its property-rights. In that case, they are not educated enough to be members of a democratic society; and society, in reality, for such people, has no meaning except as an expedient by which their property and privilege is secured.

Democracy is indubitably a difficult and delicate system of government. It needs must be, since it does represent a final form of civil government. It is an attempt at the realization of an ideal: namely that in a truly human society each member should be valid as a person. Response to that ideal is the real dynamic of the struggle towards democracy, which, once achieved, offers to every person the means of fully establishing his own validity as a person. But that is on condition that he takes his new social responsibility seriously. Democracy is not the end, but the beginning of travail. For if democracy, being achieved, decays into a mere mechanism for the resolution of the conflict of immediate interests within the social whole, its moral and religious vitality begins also to decay. It is to deceive oneself to suppose that, now that democracy is established, and the mechanics for the resolution of conflicting interests instituted, the immediate interests of the working class are such that they will, gradually or suddenly, compel a social revolution. In order that the true interest of the working class may now effectively prevail, the conflict between the immediate interests of the various sections of the working class

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has to be not composed or resolved, but transcended. The establishment of the least common denominator among these immediate interests is now completely ineffective for the purpose of social revolution.

That paradox the Marxist ignores; indeed, as we have seen, Marx himself ignored it. It was only beginning to appear in his lifetime. It is sometimes forgotten that he died more than fifty years ago, and that it is almost wholly within the second half of those fifty years that what Marx called 'the first phase of the workers' revolution', namely, the conquest of democracy, has been achieved. Instead of learning the lessons of that period, socialist intelligence has been captivated by the Russian Revolution and reverted to the most primitive form of a Marxist theory, which had never come into real contact with the problems of socialism under democracy. This neo-primitive Marxism cannot admit that these problems are really new, and that neither in Marx-Leninism nor in Marxism itself can be found the faintest indication how to solve them. The attraction of Marx-Leninism is that it solves everything, and that problems which it cannot solve cannot exist.

§

The problem that emerges, when the working class has conquered Democracy, is the one we have formulated: namely, that the working class has to achieve unity on a new level of awareness. Political 'unity', as

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currently understood, will not suffice now to make the working class effective for socialism. No pooling of immediate interests among the varied sections of the working class will produce a common immediate interest which has a socialist implication. There is no programme of 'immediate demands' on which the working class can unite for socialism; a working class in democracy can be dynamically united only on demands which are not immediate: but which are necessary for the transformation of society as a whole into a socialist society. Since that appears to the modern realist hopelessly idealistic, he is forced back to the programme of 'defending democracy'. So that one asks again: What is it that he imagines he is defending? Is it, as it seems to be, merely the existence of the mechanism by which interests are composed and resolved in post-capitalist society? No one will attack it, for the good reason that democracy, when it is regarded and treated simply as a mechanism, is an incomparable instrument for paralysing any effort of the working class to pursue its true interest as a whole as distinct from the immediate interests of its sections.

From the moral or religious angle the necessity that is incumbent on a proletariat which has achieved democracy (and thereby ceased to be a proletariat) is to posit to itself an end which bears a relation to itself in its new condition analogous to that which the conquest of democracy bore to it while it was still a proletariat. The only analogous end it can now posit to itself is social equality. But how can it posit this end

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to itself, or how can it will the means towards it, unless it is prepared to practise social equality in itself? Without that preparedness it is involved in a psychological or moral contradiction. Whereas the proletariat, before achieving democracy, was democratic, and reached democracy by means of democracy; now the working class is faced by the analogous, but far harder task of becoming socialist in order to achieve socialism — and to become socialist, not in the perfunctory sense of accepting that label, but in the same real and concrete sense in which the proletariat was democratic before it achieved democracy.

Before the necessity of this achievement, of which its consciousness is unaware, the working-class political movement in post-capitalist democracy hesitates bewildered and is lost. The one chance for it is that its leaders should proclaim fearlessly the necessity of positing this self-transcendent end, and of willing the means towards it. That is not possible, because as yet they neither understand nor believe in it. To this condition of deep instinctive bewilderment of the working class, the modern Marxist brings not clarity, but confusion. He insists not merely that a self-transcendent end is unnecessary, but that it is inconceivable. There is no source of creative political action but the egoistic drive of interest and economic necessity. We do not deny for one moment that many Communists do, in their actual behaviour, entirely belie their own theory; or that they are, as persons, wholly superior to their creed. But what kind of Marxism is this? Marxism claims to be before all

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things else, a creed, a philosophy, a religion of consciousness — a doctrine of the unity of theory and practice. In this perverted form, it becomes merely a fanaticism which leads men into tragic blunders, and prevents them from learning even by their own experience.

So it is that modern Marxism, instead of being able to understand the crisis of hesitation and bewilderment which has overtaken the Labour movement in post-capitalist society, instead of comprehending that the crisis was inevitable, and seeking to bring to birth a creative solution out of it, adds the weight of influence and its apparatus of scientific theory to blocking up all possibility of creative issue from the deadlock. Instead of learning by experience, it distorts the experience itself to fit its pattern. The triumph of National Socialism in Germany was surely a writing on the wall.

Yet what was the interpretation by the modern Marxist of that catastrophe? First — for it has gone through many phases — that the German working class was divided and had not had the courage to seize political power. Never an attempt to discover *why* the German working class was divided. So in the next phase, an insistence on the necessity of the unity of the working class. But never an attempt to make clear the vital difference between conventional political unity and unity for socialism; and to discover what this latter unity involves, and why the working class has not achieved unity for socialism in post-capitalist society. The reason is that the working class cannot,

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as a class in the Marxist sense of the word, achieve unity for socialism; in the degree to which it veritably achieves such unity it transcends all economic determination. It puts itself outside society, indeed, but in an entirely new sense; it becomes a society within a society — a fraternity within a nation, a democracy within a democracy.

CHAPTER XII

THE NECESSITY OF
SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

ONE who accepts the Marxist critique of capitalist society, but is not hypnotized by the Marxist dogma, is forced to seek in capitalist democracy a class which shall have a revolutionary relation towards it analogous to that which the proletariat had to primitive capitalist society; and he is driven to the conclusion that there is now no economic class which stands naturally in that relation to post-capitalist society. He is compelled to entertain the possibility that the revolutionary 'class' is now the grouping of revolutionary individuals. This is a particular way of saying that capitalist democracy imposes on the former unconscious revolutionary class, if it is to remain dynamic for radical social change, the duty of consciousness and responsibility. This duty of consciousness in revolutionary purpose, involves a far more radical change in the working class than is recognized by any theory of scientific Socialism — a change of such a nature that now to formulate the purpose of the working class as the conscious prosecution of its class-interest is seriously misleading. A conscious revolutionary purpose in respect to capitalist democracy must be a purpose which consciously

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transcends all class-interest; it must aim at the transformation of society as a whole.

But, it may be said, modern Communism does aim at that. It aims to transform a class-society into a classless society. We will consider that notion in a moment. But what we need to understand is that capitalist democracy is already a classless society, to the extreme extent that the working class wills it to be one. Formally, political democracy is a classless society; formally, it is a society wherein its members possess the power to fill that classless form with just so much classless content as they will. In such a society the advance towards more classlessness can only be achieved by the advance of a conscious determination to achieve it within that form. The necessity of consciousness is now inescapable. In other words, society, which is now formally a whole, can transform itself into a living whole, only as a whole. More practically still, you can advance from capitalist democracy towards 'the classless society' peacefully, or not at all.

The conscious will to social revolution within capitalist democracy must be pacific. If it is not, it contravenes and denies the sole element in extant society that is veritably classless; and thus it must be paralysed by its own moral contradiction. The pacific achievement of the classless society is the only end that can be consciously posited by socialism in post-capitalist democracy, without inward self-negation; and that is an end which is, in respect to all classes of society, self-transcendent.

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This becomes plain if we consider what is involved in the idea of ‘a classless society’ — a phrase used by Socialists in general with deplorable naivety. It is surely not possible to imagine any society without a functional hierarchy. A society, precisely because it is a society, must delegate the authority which is inherent in the whole to certain of its members. There must be centres of power. And inevitably, in any society, superior dignity will attach to those to whom its power is delegated. The existence of anything that can honestly be called ‘a classless society’ will therefore depend not on the absence of holders of power (which is impossible) but upon the attitude of those who exercise it. If they regard their possession of power simply as a necessary functional differentiation — as, for example, A would be a carpenter, B a judge, C a mechanic, and D a bishop: but, A, B, C, and D are all alike letters of the alphabet, or members of a fraternal society — then there is a real sense in which such a society may be described as classless. But it is evident that the establishment of such a society calls for an extraordinary degree of spiritual cultivation, ‘in widest commonalty spread’. The only great organization known to western history which has dimly acknowledged such an ideal and sometimes faintly pursued it is the Christian Church. And it seems evident that the possibility of a classless society in this sense (which is the only meaningful one) must depend

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on its being pervaded by the Christian morality. No external controls can keep alive the spirit of humility in those to whom power is delegated. It is a delusion to imagine that a simple approximation to equality of income would assure this: for, in the first place, the proper performance of the functions associated with the exercise of power requires that all manner of services should be rendered to the person of the functionary, which would be the equivalent of much greater money-income; and, secondly, even if equality of emolument were less specious than it must in fact be, it could not, by itself, prevent the pride and the abuse of power.

That is not to suggest that outward checks are valueless. They are very valuable as cutting off many of the most obvious temptations to the abuse of power. But none of them touch, and none of them can touch the root of the evil. ‘Power always corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely,’ said Lord Acton. There is enough truth in that grim statement to make us realize, very forcibly, that the central problem of human society is the control of those to whom it must delegate its power.

That control can be attempted in two ways: first, by the establishment of appropriate social mechanisms, of which the chief, probably, is to multiply, as far as possible, the number of planes on which society is organized. This runs counter to the main trend of development in modern industrial society which is towards combination, centralization and uniformity. In order to approximate towards a classless society

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this trend would need to be consciously curbed and controlled. Centralization would be suffered only with the utmost circumspection and only where it is absolutely necessary, while every viable form of local autonomy and heterogeneous grouping would be encouraged. But in reality the precondition of such control being vigorously exercised, is the inward moral and religious control of an active Christian conscience in the depositories of power. I do not believe that the Christian conscience can exist for long apart from the Christian faith.¹ That teaches a man true humility, and imparts to him the light in which he does verily regard all men as his equals, and their various gifts, graces and functions as bestowed upon them by God. The classless society is, therefore, inconceivable except as a Christian society. Since democracy is the formal pattern of a classless society, the succinct definition of a classless society is a Christian and decentralized democracy.

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Unless it is conceived as being informed by this Christian morality, the 'classless society' is a dangerous mirage, a vague and delusive phantom in pursuing which men will surrender themselves to the egoistic hypocrisies of power. Since the hard-boiled theorists of socialism tend to regard as the ideal a form of society in which they themselves occupy the positions of power, they are seldom conscious of the equivocation

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that lurks within the idea of the classless society. By a curious but familiar self-deception they are persuaded that provided they, who 'believe' in the classless society are members of the ruling-class within it, it must be the classless society indeed. Therefore they are disinclined to analyse the notion, because that would involve examining themselves; and instead of seeking to educate themselves and their comrades into an understanding of the kind of movement they must create if the idea of the classless society is not to be a dangerous will-o'-the-wisp, they concentrate attention on some melodramatic crisis in a hypothetical future. Thus, for example, the situation over which socialist intellectuals are never tired of exercising themselves is 'the pro-slavery rebellion' which Marx thought probable. If there were a democratic victory for Socialism, say the theorists, the privileged classes would resist its execution.

When a Socialist Government attains power as well as office, Mr. Laski expects to see a defection of the propertied class, directed towards making it impossible to use the forms of the constitution to bring about the changes that make up the Labour Party's avowed programme. Not only will the flight of capital become in effect an undermining of the authority of Parliament and the administration; the Civil Service, by the temper of mind belonging to the class from which its administrative grade is recruited, will be unable to co-operate wholeheartedly with its political chiefs; and even the Judges, by their professional instinct to interpret all legislation so as to allow the minimum

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disturbance of the common law which is itself a convention for the defence of property, will become, though without conscious disingenuousness, an obstacle to the fulfilment of the people's will. If the Socialist administration is then driven to revolutionary measures to sustain its authority, the responsibility for the abandonment of the historic constitutional tradition will lie with the conservative side.²

Such is the gloomy forecast on which most of the theorizing of intellectual socialists is based. It is largely irrelevant, because the situation which it anticipates will not easily arise. If these able theoreticians, instead of assuming the situation in which 'a Socialist Government attains power as well as office', would set themselves to examine all that is really involved in the achievement of this situation which they posit by a stroke of the pen, they would be more valuably occupied. If one thing has been made clear by political developments in Europe during the last twenty years, it is that in no democratic country has the working class been prepared for socialism. Voting Labour, going on strike — these provide no evidence of preparedness for that profound ethical change which is presupposed in a resolute determination for socialism. The working man cannot, indeed, be expected to be wildly enthusiastic for a programme which, so far as he has any concrete experience of it, means a great deal of increase of not conspicuously sympathetic or fraternal officials. It is not always perversity, or fear, or ignorance, which makes so many working men prefer a Conservative to a Socialist:

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they sometimes find him preferable as a human being. And not until the Labour movement is permeated and inspired by the authentic spirit of fraternity, will socialism be sincere enough, or attractive enough to the democratic majority, to induce them to put a socialist government 'into power as well as office'. When the Labour movement has realized that revolution towards a classless society must necessarily begin at home, and when its effects are visible in the creation of something ethically superior to the conventional political party, then the intellectual prognostications of what may happen if a resolute socialist government were to achieve power will be different, and they will have more cogency. Till that time the English working class, though it may vote Labour, will remain unconvinced by socialism, and remain pacific, democratic, and distinctly conservative.

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Unfortunately, the process of history will not stand still: and the failure of socialists to go forward with their own internal revolution, will leave them less and less capable of clear and coherent opposition to the National government. It grows daily more and more probable that in a milder way we British will experience the degeneration of liberal democracy into a pseudo-democratic totalitarianism. And this will be mainly due to the failure of the socialist movement to posit its own end and the congruent means towards it.

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The failure of socialism to understand and declare that it seeks an aim that is transcendent to all classes in society prepares the way for authoritarian government. In this sense, it is painfully true that modern Communism, combined with the merely negative reaction of the more conservative Labour movement against it, is the parent of Fascism. On the one hand to emphasize class-struggle, to seek for class-victory, and to see the consummation in civil war; on the other hand, merely to deny these things as inexpedient, and to settle comfortably down to the notion that democracy will painlessly evolve into — something or other — these, in a democratic society exposed to the tensions of a disintegrating world-economy, are the way to virtual destruction.

That this nemesis has not more completely overtaken the Labour movement in England — that its condition is rather one of moral paralysis than actual extinction — is due, mainly, to the fact that the Labour movement in England has never been Marxist — it has not, in fact, insisted on the class-struggle *à outrance*, nor been very seriously internationalist. And the cause of that is that democracy has been much more of a reality in England (and in France) than it was in Germany and Italy. The realistic instinct of a people in whose actual experience democratic politics were the politics of power, and not merely façade as in Germany, has therefore operated to prevent the positing of class-struggle *à outrance* as the conscious socialist aim. It has been felt, vaguely perhaps but strongly, that this would somehow be a denial of

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democracy itself. Unfortunately, this instinctive check has been negative only. It has prevented the Labour movement from denying and thus betraying democracy; but it has not urged the movement on to assert democracy — that is, consciously and responsibly to envisage as its aim the effort to fill the classless form with a classless content.

Yet, since this is the only form which a Labour movement in capitalist democracy can take, without self-contradiction, a situation of dangerous stagnation has developed. In this stagnation, its forces tend to separate in accordance with that inward necessity: on the one side, the unconscious self-contradiction of the Labour party, on the other side, the conscious self-contradiction of the Communist movement. And the cleavage between these two can find no resolution — nor will it find any, so long as Labour politics is conceived unconsciously by the one, and consciously by the other, as a prosecution of class-interest. We have explained the fallacy of the conception that the automatic operation of class-interest can be effective towards socialism. The fallacy is in the abstract conception of the working class, as something whose homogeneity and unity for socialism is *given*, whereas in fact precisely that homogeneity and unity by virtue of which alone it is dynamically a class instead of abstractly a classification, has now to be consciously striven for and deliberately achieved. Perhaps it is impossible to *demonstrate* that this involves a radical change in the quality and ethos of the movement. This may be one of those propositions which is either

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self-evident or not evident at all. But so long as theoretical socialism fails to understand the nature of this necessary change, so long will it be, in fact, passive instead of revolutionary. The nature of this change can be discovered only in experience: either positively and creatively, by the individual who, in his effort towards the classless society, undergoes the change from interestedness to disinterestedness, from self-assertion to self-sacrifice, and is conscious of what he has undergone; or negatively and disastrously, by the slow and inevitable decay of a Labour movement which either unconsciously ignores, or consciously denies, the reality and necessity of that change.

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It is at this crucial point that we pass from the economic or the political to what is (as ordinarily understood) the religious. And this movement is the passing, not from reality to illusion, as the theorists persuade themselves, but from the abstract to the concrete, from the idea to the individual, from false consciousness to true consciousness, from irresponsibility to responsibility. It might be well if there were another word than 'religious' to describe this condition which is beyond the political, this position in which the individual, after having struggled through an awareness that his own conventional reality is illusory, enters into his own concrete reality once again. If there is a truer and a better word than 'religious' for this

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realization, I am eager to receive it. I do not care about the word; but I am concerned for the realization — for on this, I am convinced, depends the possibility of a just social revolution. Without this conscious return to final and unannihilable reality of the person, there will be no revolution for the better in this society of ours. What revolution may come will be for the worse; it will be the destructive revolution imposed by the ineluctable pressure of events against which men were not real enough to pit their own reality. I am equally convinced that this revolution of the individual upon which the revolution of society depends is not a recondite thing beyond the reach of Everyman. On the contrary, the appeal for this revolution is understood immediately by the working man to whom it is addressed. Only it cannot be expressed in directly 'political' terms: it is a religious appeal, and can be made only in religious terms. And I believe not only that the 13th Chapter of Corinthians, for example, tells the working man more about the essence of socialism than whole volumes full of election addresses, but that the working man understands it and responds to it more directly than his political pastors and masters to-day. He knows instinctively, what they have forgotten, that a classless society is not achieved by pursuing class-interest. He knows that human life is never at a standstill. Either it struggles to be better, or it becomes worse. And the struggle to be better — what is it but the effort towards self-transcendence?

That is the effort to which a socialist movement is

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compelled by the sheer necessity of life, in a democratic society. That effort is required of the working class, if it is to remain valid as a force working for good. Maybe it is too much to expect, or even to hope, from hundreds of thousands of men; and assuredly those who have tried it a little on themselves will not be sanguine. But at least we can become conscious that it is required, and not deceive ourselves and others into a false security, or drive them to an equally false despair, by denying that self-transcendence is a possibility, by proclaiming a philosophy which explicitly excludes it, and by insisting that interest and interest alone will carry society through to salvation.

It will do nothing of the kind; it can do nothing of the kind. It will do the very opposite. Because the deepest hunger in Man is the hunger for self-transcendence. And self-transcendence can be either divine or diabolical. If by lack of courage, or lack of truth, you cheat man of the possibility of self-transcendence towards the Divine (which is the Human), you drive him towards the necessity of self-transcendence towards the diabolical. If, in a democracy you will not offer him the ascent towards true community, he will take the descent towards false community — to the homogeneity of nationalistic totalitarianism. Against that you oppose, or think you oppose, the true community of Internationalism. I am all for Internationalism; but it is a remote and abstract idea. I ask myself: What can I do to promote it? What does to be an Internationalist imply for my actual life?

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What change in my behaviour does it bring? How shall my neighbour know that I am an Internationalist, except by reading my label?

I say that Internationalism, if it is to be a reality of experience, if it is to be a stronger motive in men than Nationalism, must be more than a bloodless abstraction. It must mean that I strive to treat all men as my brothers. And there can be no reality in this profession, unless I strive for it here and now. I live among my own people. Unless I am willing to strive to be brother to them, it is futile to talk of being brother to men of other races. That is what old George Fox, the Quaker prophet, denounced as 'notionism'. He said of one who opposed him, and whom he convinced: 'He was nothing but a notionist and not in possession of what he talked of.' 'Notionist' Internationalism will never be able to resist the power of Nationalism; and the Internationalism that is not 'notionist' involves an effort towards the simple and difficult practice of human brotherhood. I do not say that this will be able, in fact, to overcome the forces of Nationalism: but I do say that nothing else can. And human brotherhood, if it also is not to be a mere notion, requires the real, concrete and unremitting effort at individual self-transcendence in his relations with his fellow-man. That will keep a man busy all day and every day — not in some irrelevant effort towards a merely individual self-perfection. That is the effort to which you are compelled as a socialist. No matter what brand of socialist you are: if you are a socialist in

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modern democracy, this is what you are compelled to embody and to manifest — the possibility and the reality of human brotherhood.

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Thus revolutionary activity in post-capitalist democracy becomes, inevitably, 'religious'. Essentially, it never was anything else, if religious activity be understood in the sense we previously defined: the self-dedication of the individual to the furtherance of the meaningful pattern discovered in history. But when Marx began his work, such self-dedication could be taken for granted. No member of the bourgeoisie became a Communist in the 1840's except at the cost of a complete sacrifice of his worldly interests. Marx, having seen his vision and made his decision, did not have to insist upon the nature of the process of conversion to Communism any more. He was concerned with the creation of a political party of the working class; and with the forcing of an entry by the proletariat into capitalist society. That was not achieved in his lifetime, but it was achieved; and with that a totally new epoch of Socialist thinking should have begun. The premise of that thinking should have been the realization that the 'proletariat' had ceased to exist. The problem of that thinking should have been to discover the new revolutionary 'class'.

The answer to that problem is that the revolutionary

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class in post-capitalist democracy consists of the revolutionary individuals; and that this can be demonstrated in theory, and proved in practice. The revolutionary function which was unconsciously inherent in the proletariat, now has to be consciously imagined and experienced. To look upon this necessary change as consisting merely in making the working class 'class-conscious', even to express it in those terms, is to fall into the pit of barren intellectualism. It is — in George Fox's words — to be 'nothing but a notionist and not in possession of what you talk of'. Make that notion real, and you will discover that a 'class-conscious' working class under democracy is a class of men who are consciously prepared to make a real but joyful sacrifice to achieve a classless society — and that readiness belongs and can belong by nature to no economic class whatever. It is a self-transcendent end with regard to all classes in capitalist democracy.

That means in fact a conscious effort to achieve a new relation of human brotherhood. And with that realization we pass directly into the realm of 'religion' — in the simple sense that socialists are faced with the necessity of changing themselves as human beings. 'The educators must themselves be educated', indeed. If it cannot be done, then Socialism is a dream. But the testimony of the ages is that it can be done, although it cannot easily be done. And the testimony of Marxism is that now, as never before, the whole material process of history converges upon this necessity. What was before the achievement of little

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groups of isolated men, an achievement that could be only partially relevant to the concrete process of history, is now posited as the central necessity of history.

A central necessity of history is not inevitable. It is, on the one hand, that which is required in order to make history positively significant; on the other hand, it is that to which men can dedicate themselves in the faith that they help to make it prevail. But faith is not certainty, nor ever can be. Nevertheless, in the measure in which we are ourselves changed, and thereby help others to change, we help to secure the future. This change in ourselves is not self-generated. It is, primarily, a response in ourselves to the meaningful pattern we discern in history. No such pattern can ever have decisive meaning for an individual unless it satisfies all the demands in himself that he acknowledges to be good; it must be a pattern which does not deny but fulfils all the patterns which he has discerned and to which he has responded. That is to say that revolutionary or creative activity is the unity of two things: the complete submission of the individual, and the complete affirmation of the person. Nor is one of these possible without the other. There can be no complete affirmation of the person without complete submission to the reality which he discerns by imagination: without that complete submission he must be a prey to his own sense of irrelevance. On the other hand, without a complete affirmation of the person no complete submission to reality is possible.

Beyond this point, I suppose, angels fear to tread.

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This is the central paradox of Life itself. All one can say is that the submission comes first. If we approach reality with the demand that it shall endorse the complete affirmation of our individuality, we deny Life itself. At every moment, in a growing and creative life, ‘we know not yet what we shall be’. We die many deaths. Every major act of submission to reality is a death: and a birth. And so long as history permits those deaths and births to continue, so long are they necessary to history. By which is meant — among other things — that it is not an accident that in the democracies that fusion between Marxism and Christianity of which society now stands in need should be attempted by various minds.

Under what sign it will be accomplished I do not know. Here the realm in which I move is subjective. But I believe that it will be accomplished under the sign of Christianity. A Christianity that includes Marxism is far more real to my imagination, and true to my experience, than a Marxism that seeks the aid of Christianity. I believe, too, — measuring, of course others by myself — that men need a symbol, and a leader: and I do not believe they will find a truer symbol than the Cross, or a more faithful leader than Christ.

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Thus real internationalism — internationalism of actual behaviour — brings us back to nationalism. For the necessity of self-transcendence is in consonance

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with our tradition. This is the latest form of that revolutionary Christianity which has persisted like a golden thread in the texture of our history since we English began to be one people. It is a national internationalism, that has its origins in our peculiar English adaptation of the one great internationalism which existed before nationalities began — namely, Christianity. The beginning of the conscious movement for human equality in England was Wycliffe preachers and Wycliffe's New Testament in English.

The revolutionary importance of this translation into the vulgar tongue of the most revolutionary of the Scriptures — the only Christian scriptures — is seldom recognized. We may regret the disruption of the universalism of the medieval Catholic Church which it forboded; but we must remember that this was an authoritarian universalism, based on making and keeping Christianity a mystery. It had done a great work, not least in England, which, without the tutelage of the authoritarian Church, acting as a guardian rather of the spirit of organization of imperial Rome than the teacher of the sublime charity of the Gospels, would hardly have become a civilized society at all. The achievement of Rome's temporal power became a mystery which the Church inherited and sanctified; and the mystery, Christianized rather than Christian, became the source of temporal organization and temporal power again. By the time the Gospels were rendered into the speech of the common man, the necessary work of the great unitary Church was done. Unless it were creatively disrupted, it could do

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no more than duplicate the temporal organization of society, and bind the burden of a double government on the patient back of the labourer and the artisan. Now not the Church as a pattern and school of social hierarchy, but Christian inspiration as the source of the strivings of the secular society, was required if Christianity was still to be the vehicle of more abundant life. Not the remote and uncomprehending adoration of a mystery of power was now required of men who were beginning to lift their heads from bending over the furrow, but the reception into their hearts of the open secret of the kingdom of God. St. Peter, who, by the alchemy of history, had become the progenitor of the Popes of Rome, had now to be reincarnated in the listening fisherman which he was. Splendid had been the race of Pontiffs which he had all unknowingly begotten; but it belonged to the heart of the Christian paradox that the majesty of the Church must die and be reborn. ‘Except a corn of wheat . . .’

With the rendering of the Gospels into the vulgar tongue, Christ began to speak to his own again. His veritable words, the accent of his voice, pierced through the silent centuries and echoed in men’s hearts in the countryside. No longer they saw him through a glass darkly, but now face to face. He did not speak in an unintelligible language to tell them of consolations beyond the grave, as they had been taught. He had not spoken to the wise at all; he had spoken, as he was speaking now, to the simple and the poor glad tidings of great joy, and to the priests of the mystery he had spoken, as he was speaking now. ‘Woe unto you,

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Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!' He spoke of innocence, and justice, and charity, and love. He spoke of equality, of the evil of riches, and the kingdom of God as an order to be entered now.

There was rebellion, and it was suppressed. The power of the Church and the power of the State were used together, as they have too often been used, to suppress simple men who took the Christian message seriously. But a train had been kindled, and the spark was always there. Quakers and Ranters and Independents in the seventeenth century, Methodists in the eighteenth, the Primitives in the nineteenth. As each successive wave of revolutionary Christianity froze into bourgeois opulence or bourgeois respectability, so a new wave began to arise, until at last the first step of the workers' revolution was accomplished, largely under the inspiration of revolutionary Christianity: and there was democracy — the realization of the political form of a Christian society.

In the chequered progress, limited at every stage by the development of material conditions, but never to be confused with that development, Christianity had taken a national form — the form of a specifically English Christianity. Not exclusively, or even primarily in the Church of England; though there is more than a touch of it there. But chiefly in the innumerable offshoots of heretical Nonconformity in England and America. Where save in these countries is to be found that strange and inexhaustible procession of sects from the Lollards and the Brownists onwards? Where save in England a Christianity that never fails

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to produce a form of itself that is identified with the struggle of the disinherited? Where save in England is always to be found some variety of Christianity, or some combination of many varieties, which holds fast to the truth that the Christian ethic requires of men that they shall seek to realize it in society, and that though religion may be 'what a man does with his solitude', the Christian religion is more: it is no less what he does with his social existence.

In so far as democracy is the form of society in which each person is valid as a person, and possesses political power in virtue of his individual existence, it is the eminently Christian form of society; in so far as it is a form of society which has attained the power of peaceful self-transformation it is again the eminently Christian form of society. In a secular society, organized as democracy, and sufficiently 'educated' in the value of democracy to hold fast to it under the stress and strain of self-transformation, would be realized, more concretely, and less equivocally, than in the membership of any existing Christian Church, an approximation to the Kingdom of God. Within such a society, a Christian Church is necessary; but it would need to be a Christian Church which represents a still closer approximation to the Kingdom of God. In such a society, a Christian Church which does not point the way to a more perfect fulfilment of the Kingdom serves no Christian purpose at all — nor any useful purpose either. No doubt it is good and necessary that men should be reminded that their utmost efforts whether social or private, must fall pitifully short of perfection;

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no doubt it is good and necessary that men should have their eyes opened again and again to the perspective of eternity: but the condition on which a Christian Church is worthy to perform this high office is that it should be a fearless instructor in the actual realities of Christian conduct in the society of to-day.

This noble example in his life he gaf
That first he wrought and after that he taught.

CHAPTER XIII

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY

WE have seen how Marx, from the beginning, denied the reality of the political sphere. Economics was the reality; politics the illusion; were it not that there were a still greater illusion, namely the religious. Yet strangely enough his dismissal of religion as illusion has not been so serious in its consequences as his virtual rejection of the political. Indeed, it would be not far from the truth to say that Marx's failure to consider or analyse the political was directly due to the vehemence of his own strange religious faith.

But his religious faith was Jewish rather than Christian. In so far as it was a doctrine of history, it was Jewish Messianism without the new spiritual dimension with which it had been deepened and enriched by the life and death and after-life of Jesus. In the vision of Marx the proletariat was the Messiah of capitalist society. And, as we have seen, if the proletariat and capitalist society had remained unchanged, the proletariat would probably have performed one at least of the quasi-messianic functions towards it: it would have destroyed capitalist society. Capitalist society averted destruction by doing something that a capitalist society cannot do and remain a capitalist society; it took political power away from property as such and vested it in the individual as such.

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It is in vain that the Marxist declares that political power still belongs to property in such a society as ours. Not that it is altogether untrue; for if it is the fact, as Mirabeau said, that he who administers governs, actual political power in this country is largely in the hands of a particular and exclusive (though not essentially a propertied) class, because the administration is largely in their hands. That condition obtains because the members of the sovereign democracy are content that it should obtain; in other words, because only a tiny fraction of the members of English democracy have really cared to face the problem of educating a democratic ruling class.¹ This is perhaps the most striking failure of English democracy. But the blame for it surely attaches not to the actual ruling class, still less to capitalism as such, but to the members of democracy themselves. Every adult man and woman in Great Britain has an equal share in the responsible government of society: if, through lack of understanding of the society to which they belong or lack of belief in their own capacity to take responsible decisions, they are content that the ruling class should be recruited undemocratically, they have only themselves to blame. The practical incompetence of a particular democracy based on universal suffrage to govern itself, in other than a very remote and negative fashion, cannot alter the fact that it has the power to govern itself positively and creatively, if it will. It is its own master in the same sense as a young man is when he comes of age; and if men cannot learn to behave responsibly when they come of age, there is nothing to be done,

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but to wait till they learn by experience — which in the case of a society, is a costly way of learning.

To represent such a situation — wherein the members of a democratic society fail to make responsible use of the political power which belongs to them — as a situation wherein political power does not belong to the members of the democratic society, is to be guilty of a lie. Perhaps it is not a deliberate lie; because such a misrepresentation follows inevitably from a denial of the reality of the ethico-political realm: but in that case the lie is merely pushed further back, and consists in the denial of the ethico-political. If the existence of the ethico-political is denied, not only is there no possible explanation of the facts of the concrete situation; but the actual history of political democracy passes into a kind of limbo of unreality. It happens, and it does not happen, both at the same time.

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In fact an understanding of democracy — both the principle of democracy and the concrete history of actual democracies — is absolutely essential to an understanding of socialism — again, both of the principle, and the concrete history of actual attempts towards socialism. It explains why the only system of ‘socialist’ society in actual existence has depended for its construction, and its continued existence, on the practical denial of the ethico-political. By a violent

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surgical operation Russia has been prevented from entering, as a society, into the ethico-political phase of development in Marxist terms, it has been prevented from entering upon the phase of 'bourgeois society'; and this abortion of historical development was willed by a single man, Lenin: who, at a moment in 1917, declared that 'the bourgeois revolution was over', though in fact it had not really begun. This revolutionary *fiat* is, indeed, one of the most astonishing of recent historical actions: and, no doubt, it was only made possible (as a fact in Lenin's own psychological or spiritual history) by his complete self-surrender to a philosophy which denied the existence of the ethico-political.

One understands the impulse to deny it, just as Engels denied the reality of 'the superstructure': because it was too complicated to be calculable. We may, we must, admit that the ethico-political is an ambiguous realm. Ambiguity is of its essence. For it is the realm of freedom and responsibility: the realm of freedom to make bad choices, or — more characteristic of democracy to-day — to make no choice at all, which is the worst of all choices. For the ethico-political is a dynamic realm; it is the realm in which the will of God, or the reality of the historical process, is experienced by individuals as a choice between good and evil continually set before them. In this realm if men do not consciously choose the good, the evil chooses them. Naturally, such a realm of freedom is anathema to a philosophy which denies the possibility of freedom, and with it the reality of the struggle between good and

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evil. It cannot be permitted to exist; for if it were allowed to exist socialism would obviously not be inevitable. But, as we have suggested, in historical fact it was the arbitrary will of a single man, Lenin, which denied to the Russian people the experience of entering into the ethico-political realm, as a society, and as individuals. No doubt he represented himself to himself, at the crucial moment, as the instrument of necessity; and no doubt much of the actual strength of will required to pronounce that *fiat* derived from this conviction. Nevertheless, judged by the standards of any adequate psychology or anthropology, his act was the act of a free will, arbitrarily willing that a whole people should pass, in a moment of time, beyond the possibility of good and evil.

This denial of the reality of the ethico-political in the name of the social collective, which is regarded as obedient to inexorable laws of economic necessity, has been of incalculable consequence for the disintegration of European civilization; for European civilization is based on the acknowledgment of the ethico-political either as autonomous (which is how it presents itself to the democratic consciousness), or, more generally, as heteronomous from the 'necessities' of the collectivity. The moral dynamic of European civilization has been the constant endeavour to insinuate the heteronomous requirement of the ethico-political into the collectivity. The complete permeation of the collectivity by the ethico-political means that every member of it should be regarded not as means, but as an end. To certain minds this appears to be self-evident; but that it is not

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self-evident in the strict sense of the word is plain from the fact that it was not self-evident to so penetrating a political thinker as Aristotle, to whom, on the contrary, it *was* self-evident that the most numerous section of the inhabitants of the city-state should be regarded as mere instruments. The apparent self-evidence of the duty of regarding members of society as ends, and not as means, really derives from the fact that the ethical element of the Christian revelation has come to be regarded as self-evident. It is because we are members of a Christian civilization that the primacy of the ethico-political over the necessities of the collectivity has hitherto been regarded as axiomatic.

That it is axiomatic only for Christian minds, and in a Christian civilization, has been the astonishing lesson of the past twenty years of history: wherein the weakness of the democratic mind has been so painfully revealed. It is the weakness of the mind which had come, imperceptibly, to regard the primacy of the ethico-political as given in the nature of things, that is, as an axiom deriving from the natural reason of man, instead of from the supernatural revelation of God in Christ. This descent of the axiom from the supernatural to the natural order was not surprising in members of a society whose political history for three centuries might be summed up as the slow conversion of the conviction of the value of the individual to God into a conviction of the value of the individual in his own right. By that gradual secularization of the Christian conviction political democracy had in fact been achieved. But that pro-

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cess of secularization was equivocal: it contained two different processes: one which can be truly described as a secularization (in the invidious sense of the word) of a revealed religious truth; the other, an authentic process of evangelization of society, whereby the Christian valuation of the individual for God was implemented and ratified by the social collective, which promoted him, as an individual, to be an equal member of the political society.

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A democracy, therefore, considered historically as a development of Christian civilization (entirely distinct from democracy in ancient Greece), is a Christian political society. Whether or not it is conscious of its derivation, a democracy is the product of the partial evangelization of the social collective. It is an attempt to approximate the earthly city to the city of God. A clear recognition of that fact does not involve us in the fallacy of identifying democracy with Christianity, or of declaring that democracy is the only possible form of a Christian political society. If we say simply that democracy derives its worth and its dynamic from the attempt to approximate the earthly city to the city of God, our position is not weakened by the realization that democracy may fail: for such an attempt may be premature, or it may have been facilitated by all kinds of adventitious circumstances (as in the case of England, by geographical isolation and material prosperity), or it may fail because its members have ceased

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to be mindful of the fact that its apparent natural axioms are the revealed truths of the Christian religion — which is what seems likely to happen. All that we maintain is that democracy is rationally intelligible only as the attempt to create a Christian political society — as the endeavour to form a political society wherein the individual members shall be given, as fully as possible, the responsibility of Christian freedom in the determination of their own lives as members of society.

Once a democratic society is thus regarded, it is evident that it cannot maintain itself except in so far as its members are truly conscious of the gift and burden of responsible freedom which has now fallen to them. By that burdensome gift the social collective as a whole enters the realm of Christian freedom, and all its members are as it were foci of the consciousness, and of the experienced reality, of that Christian freedom. *All* their acts are now the outcome of a choice between good and evil — even those innumerable acts which, in their immediate experience, appear to be imposed upon them by the necessities of the collective. No adult member of a democracy can escape, before the judgment bar of God, from his responsibility for the acts of society as well as his acts as an individual. Therefore, in a democracy it is of supreme importance that the institutions of society, by means of which the necessities of the collective are imposed upon its members, and in obeying which their acts appear to them de-individualized and outside the control of their judgment of good and evil, should be — to the utmost

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extent possible — good. And they must be good, not in accordance with any standard derived from the natural reason, but in accordance with the standard of good derived from that Christian revelation from which democracy itself derives its sanction: that is to say, they must be institutions which, so far as is humanly possible, promote that consciousness of responsible Christian freedom, which is the essence of the Christian life.

Such are the laws of its own continued life which are inherent in the original constitution of a modern democratic society. Even if democratic societies were aware of the existence of these laws, to obey them would be no easy matter. But to obey them when the great majority of the members of democratic society, and even the majority of democratic statesmen, have at the best only a confused and instinctive cognizance of them, if they have any at all, is surely impossible. The salvation of democracy therefore depends upon making an effort, of a new and unprecedented kind, to permeate its members with a knowledge of the vocation to which they are called. In simple truth, membership of a democracy is a Christian vocation. That was always true, for it is a truth knit up with the original constitution of democracy: but to-day the truth, hitherto concealed, is being plainly revealed. And now the effort to permeate democracy with a proper knowledge of the laws of its own existence, that is, to inculcate in its members the nature and kind of their responsibility, must fall as a duty upon those who become aware of it.

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Two observations follow naturally upon this view of the nature of democracy, as an attempt to realize the Christian ethico-political values in the collective. The first is that whatever there is of positive value in the rather hazy notion of socialism, derives directly from this conception of democracy. What is good in the idea of socialism, is therefore completely contained, or involved, in the idea of Christian democracy. Those institutions of society which, as we have seen, must be good in the definite sense that they must promote in the individual member that consciousness of responsible Christian freedom, which is the essence of the Christian life, obviously include institutions which would be labelled socialistic. But the 'socialism' which is involved in Christian democracy is nothing autonomous; it is subordinate at every point to the governing criterion. Socialistic institutions can be admitted and welcomed only in so far as they promote Christian freedom. Thus the concept of Christian democracy is the solvent which undoes the inhuman identification of socialism with the mere tyranny of the collective, and demolishes the tacit and intolerable assumption that the collective is always to be preferred to the individual. 'The Sabbath was made for Man, not Man for the Sabbath.' Christian democracy will validate, by the only means whereby it can be validated, all that is truly human and humane in the socialist ideal; while it unhesitatingly rejects all that conflicts with or diminishes the Christian freedom of the person.

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In the second place, it is obvious that a socialism which rejects democracy, and establishes itself by the rejection of democracy, is vitiated at the source.² Ethically, it is based on the belief that men must be denied that increase of responsible freedom which democracy offers them, because they will abuse it — abuse of freedom in this context consisting in a refusal to abandon their property and their persons to the collective. They are, in Rousseau's paradox, to be compelled to be free. One need not commit oneself to the general proposition that it is impossible to compel men to be free, or that the paradox is a mere contradiction in terms. There are various degrees and orders of freedom; and it is surely true that in a condition of social chaos the enforcement of order by sheer compulsion is the enforcement of a limited but genuine freedom. As Cromwell said, any order is better than none. But such freedom as members of an authoritarian society attain by compulsion is rudimentary in the scale of morality; and it is of an entirely different kind from the freedom which is promised to members of a communist society; for what is held out to them is the achievement of a society which secures to its members perfect freedom — or at least a more perfect freedom than has yet been achieved in human history. It is entirely fantastic to suppose that a condition of such freedom can be attained by depriving people of the responsibility of freedom on the way to it. That is the madness of apocalypticism, which is the consequence of rejecting the reality of the ethico-political.

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This is not to deny that democracy may be incapable of filling the Christian-democratic form with a Christian-democratic content. In other words, the members of a democratic society may prove to be incapable of freely willing those further limitations of the property-right which are essential to the creative functioning of a machine economy. Here the distinction between optimum and maximum functioning which we previously made is of cardinal importance. We understand by the optimum functioning of a machine-economy its employment in the production of commodities, goods and services which make for the well-being of the largest possible number of individual members of the community. The maximum functioning of such an economy is entirely independent of such an ethical criterion. The production of a billion gas-masks, and ten thousand square miles of bomb-proof concrete shelters might be the maximum functioning of a machine-economy; it could not be the optimum functioning. The fearful situation of the world to-day is due, on the purely economic level, to the necessity of the functioning of the economic machine combined with the impossibility, without a revolutionary reform of the property-right, of distributing commodities that make for the positive well-being of society. Hence the compulsive functioning of the European economy towards destruction. Weapons of destruction, and of defence against destruction, are the only things that

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can be given away on a colossal scale — bombs to the enemy children and gas-masks to our own — without disrupting existing social relations and the property-system. Hence the antithetical necessity, so striking and so grievous in our own case, of pursuing peace by multiplying preparations for war.

This compulsion to destructive production has for its sequel the increasing organization of the democracies on a military basis which is the opposite of the discipline required by a democracy if it is to develop creatively. It is one of the gravest weaknesses of democracy that the need of discipline has never been widely recognized, nor any sustained thought given to the kind of discipline that democracy requires. Consequently the only current concept of discipline is that of military discipline, to which democracy is instinctively and rightly recalcitrant. But since it avoids the subtler and more delicate discipline which is necessary to its own positive development, namely, the discipline of Christian fraternity, it is forced in the end to submit to a military discipline: which is destructive of the democratic ethos and potentially subversive of the democratic system. Thus, by lacking courage or vision to take the democratic way to socialism, democracy condemns itself to authoritarianism, — even though indirectly.

Democracy cannot stand still. Either it must advance towards a fuller realization of responsible freedom, or it will relapse, directly or indirectly, towards authoritarianism. Whether it will advance or not, is beyond my power to prophesy. I devoutly hope it will;

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but I am certain that advance is impossible unless there is a clear realization of all that it involves, and above all a determination to regain the moral initiative which democracy so pitifully surrendered twenty years ago.

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WE can now see that it is the self-delusion of moral inertia to suppose that the drift of European society towards the spurious community of totalitarianism can be withstood by an affirmation of our 'faith in democracy', if we mean by it, as we almost always do, our own peculiar form of the parliamentary system. That is no prophylactic against disaster. Democracy is the system by which the members of a society are given the maximum of responsible freedom. There is no mysterious virtue in the system itself whereby the citizens of the society are constrained to make a wise use of the responsible freedom which they have attained. They have come of age, and entered into their patrimony: the analogue of that legal and formal, but significant transformation, democracy does indeed secure to its citizens. But it can, of itself, do nothing to prevent them behaving like fools and squandering their patrimony. To say that one believes in democracy and to leave it at that, is nearly as silly as it would be to say that one believes in people coming of age.

It will be felt, by those at least who take a short view of the situation, that the perversion of the productive energies of society to the production of instruments of destruction on a fantastic scale, which indirectly

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promotes the subversion of democracy, is not willed by the democracies. They are compelled to it by the aggressiveness of the totalitarian countries. That is only superficially true; and if we accept that account of the matter we are deluding ourselves, in the familiar way.

Men at some time are masters of their fate:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

In the first place there is an economic compulsion to produce for destruction, since our property-system does not permit us to produce maximally for construction. Secondly, after the last war we had opportunity after opportunity of disarming: the world expected it of us, and we were pledged to Germany to do so. Had we taken disarmament seriously and not used it merely to hold Germany down, the situation would have been vastly different to-day. Thirdly, the reason why we were 'unable' to disarm was that we needed our armaments to maintain a flagrantly unjust treaty of peace. The same moral failure of British democracy which is operative on the economic plane as a compulsion to produce for destruction, since it has not the imagination or the will to change an obsolete and unjust property-system, was manifest on the world-political plane as a brutal determination to wreak vengeance on an heroic but defeated Germany. It is not Germany, but the democracies which began the definite movement of regression from civilization and from justice which has become a stampede to-day.

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The maintenance of the hunger-blockade of Germany by the Allies for eight months after the armistice, inflicting upon the innocent German people 800 deaths a day, and untold hardship upon the children, is one of the foulest crimes of modern times. Now, it is true, Germany has taken the grim lead in barbarism. But how much despair, how much cynicism, did we not need to create in German hearts before that wave of reversion was possible? The moral guilt of the democracies in continuing the blockade and imposing the Peace of Versailles with the moral humiliation of the 'war-guilt' clause is terrible to contemplate. The hypocrisy of our public declarations rises up like a judgment against us: that we were fighting not against the peoples but the rulers of Germany, that we were struggling to make the world safe for democracy, that we were engaged in a war to end war. These things one has tried to forget: for what was the use of remembering them? Why remember that generation of gallant youth which died for a cause which the 'statesmen' of democracy so shamelessly betrayed? What could the memory bring but blank and utter despair?

The moral abdication of democracy was in 1918. The nemesis has been swift and bitter, and it has only begun. But even to-day, one thing seems certain: that the great twin democracies of western Europe will never be in such a commanding position again, never again be in a position to give the world the example of justice from overwhelming strength. Because of that moral abdication — that great refusal — democracy is, in twentieth-century Europe, no longer an expanding

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faith, as it was in the nineteenth century. It is not for an advance of democracy that we have to struggle to-day; the time for that has long since gone by, and the opportunity of it we ourselves threw away: our struggle is to halt, if we can, the insidious and accelerating process of the decay of democracy.

I make no claim to possess an especially sensitive conscience; but the moral *débâcle* of the blockade and of Versailles plunged me into a condition of despair concerning human destiny out of which I struggled only after five long years, and then only by way of a mystical illumination. My faith, such as it is, is not primarily a faith in this world. Nevertheless, the most transcendent faith must return to earth. It is here, on the sweet and familiar and violated earth, that we must struggle that the good may prevail. If the war of 1914-18 and the shameful peace which ended it, appeared to me twenty years ago so nakedly evil, so beyond all possibility of justification, that it weighed like lead upon my soul for five long years, is it possible that the consequences of this crime against man, this sin against God, shall be expiated without a terrible humiliation of my country? I do not pretend to answer. But I ask myself the question, again and again.¹

There is repentance; and there is humiliation. I believe that the salvation of democracy lies in repentance. If, as I believe, democracy is a Christian form of society, if its living idea is a Christian idea, and its fundamental value a Christian value, then the repentance of democracy cannot really be a motion alien to its soul, although the politics of repentance

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may be strange to its habits. But I believe that, unless we discover the politics of repentance, the condition of moral crisis into which the democracies are plunged will degenerate into a condition of despair and decay.

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Nevertheless, when all this is fully admitted, as it must be, there are excuses to be made for the democracies. Of these the chief is that democracy, in the modern sense, is a new system of government, and that its failure to acquire a sense of responsibility is not surprising. One might well ask: Who, in contemporary English democracy, *has* a sense of responsibility? Granted the working class has behaved irresponsibly, have their superiors behaved any better? On the contrary, they have behaved rather worse. The record of English 'conservatives' during and since the war is truly appalling. The irresponsible sabotage of the League of Nations in which they indulged, their apparent inability to consider any other than a purely selfish interest, at home and abroad, and even that in a completely short-sighted and unimaginative way, seems to show that they are verily incapable of realizing that we live in a new world, where their myopic egotism is madness. If democracy has failed, it is not that anything better could replace it in this country. It is quite absurd to suppose that any conceivable aristocracy, or oligarchy, or dictatorship, or absolute monarchy would serve us any better. Democracy is

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still more sensitive and more conscious than any authoritarian government that could replace it: the democracies suffer from a kind of moral paralysis, indeed, but it is because they are superior organisms that they are thus inhibited.

The paralysis of the national will which is indeed apparent in the democracies, and can be plausibly diagnosed as decadence, proceeds from a condition of profound moral bewilderment. If it be true in the world of nations that 'he who hesitates is lost', then the democracies are lost: for they are plunged into a crisis of hesitation which will not easily be resolved. The plain fact of the matter is that they are incapable of meeting, on its own level and with its own weapons, the challenge to their vestigial Christian values which is being deliberately made by the Fascist totalitarian states. The incapacity springs from a moral reluctance. That moral reluctance would, no doubt, be overwhelmed once the horrors of international war were let loose; but that makes no difference to the fact that there is, so long as peace can be preserved, a genuine moral reluctance in the democracies to meet the challenge of Fascist totalitarianism on its own level and with its own weapons. Nations need peace for their moral conscience to be operative, just as individuals need calm: and reluctance to go to war, and above all to have recourse to the abominations of totalitarian war, is itself a sign of a superior morality, a more sensitive conscience.

The democracies have offences and crimes enough to their charge, and their responsibility for the appal-

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ling degeneration of the public morality of Europe is tremendous; nevertheless, it must be plainly said that the challenge of Fascism to the democracies is the challenge of an inferior to a superior morality: and the bewilderment of the democracies is due to the fact that they do not know how to meet that challenge, without suffering moral degradation themselves. They are paralysed by the moral ambiguity of the situation in which they are involved. The injustices which they committed have indeed been righted, but by means even more unjust. They are inhibited, mainly by their horror of war, from opposing brute force to brute force. They are deeply disturbed by the necessity of treating as a civilized government one which consciously glorifies brutality, and barbarically exalts the ideal of the race over the Christian ideal of universal humanity. It is not that the democracies have served that ideal well; they have served it ill, if they have served it at all. But they have at least professed it, they have never openly repudiated it; and they are vaguely but justly apprehensive of the moral degradation that will ensue, if their leaders, for the sake of a peace that is no peace, condone barbarities which are openly flaunted to the world.

The moral problem with which the democracies are faced to-day is truly tremendous, and surely unprecedented. Whereas the line of their opponents is clear, and evil, they, as political societies, have no clear line of their own. On the level of traditional politics no such clear line can be found. Decency, within the limits of traditional political morality, not merely

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looks like weakness, but partly *is* weakness, because it is not inspired by a clear conception of the good.

In a word, the policies of the democracies to-day are lacking in faith. We English have no policy in which we can, as a nation, *believe*. We can believe neither in the policy of Mr. Chamberlain, nor in the policy of his critics. Grateful as one must be to Mr. Chamberlain, for his obvious honesty, and his unsparing efforts at a time of crisis, one cannot but feel a grievous mediocrity in his conceptions and his whole mode of feeling. His values and his field of vision are those of the upright business man. When he speaks of European 'appeasement', he appears at best to be thinking of something like the compromises of a finance committee of the Birmingham Corporation: a reconciliation of conflicting but legitimate commercial 'interests'. No public utterance of his has suggested that he has any conception (such as Baldwin had) of the true nature of the crisis in which Europe and the world are involved to-day. In saying this, we may be doing Mr. Chamberlain a grave injustice; it may be that he is aware of the tremendous issues, but that he finds it impossible to articulate his awareness. He is, he says, no orator; and he is inclined to insist upon it. It may be that he intends, by this insistence that he has no gift of expression, to acknowledge that he finds the nature of the moral and spiritual conflict in Europe impossible to define. If that be so, Mr. Chamberlain deserves our sympathy rather than our criticism: for this conflict certainly cannot be defined in the conventional language of politics.

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An attempt to define the nature of this conflict must, we think, begin by recognizing that there has arisen no issue between England and Germany on which it can be fairly said, even by those who believe in war as the final arbitrament, that we definitely *ought* to have gone to war. It cannot possibly be made a principle of a sane foreign policy that we should undertake preventive wars against non-democratic countries, either on imperial or ideological grounds. Still less can we go to war with Germany to prevent her from persecuting her Jews, as some people seem to desire. England could not have saved republican Spain, supposing that she wanted to; neither can she save the Jews in Germany. But that is quite different from saying, or appearing to say, that Germany's brutal treatment of her Jews, or her Christians or her socialists for that matter, is her own affair — her 'national idiosyncrasy' as it has been put politely. It is not. It is our duty to protest against it; and it is disgraceful to us if we do not. The fact that our protest is bound to be immediately ineffective is immaterial. The danger is very real that we shall refuse to protest at all on the ground that it would prejudice Anglo-German relations. That is to acquiesce in our own moral degradation. It is no part of our duty to keep Herr Hitler in a good temper, and we shall not make peace one atom safer by doing so. Let it be made clear that we do believe in moral principle, even though we do not believe in setting loose international war to enforce it.

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If we made this plain, we should not deceive ourselves, or suffer Mr. Chamberlain to deceive himself and us, concerning the nature of the ‘understanding’ with Germany which he seeks. Herr Hitler has said, quite plainly, that he does not understand what Mr. Chamberlain means when he speaks of ‘understanding’. Herr Hitler, who is an expert in *mise-en-scène*, chose Munich to make this statement soon after the Munich agreement: it was certainly deliberate, and apparently sincere. He spoke of the Prime Ministers of England and France.

The word ‘understanding’ is somewhat incomprehensible to us because we do not want anything from these men, except perhaps our colonies which were taken from us on false pretences. This is, however, not a matter to go to war about, but a question of justice. Otherwise, we want nothing from these countries except to do business with them, to buy and sell to an equal extent. I really do not know what we should come to an understanding about.

There are undoubtedly several things that Mr. Chamberlain would like an understanding about—about a limitation of armaments, for instance, or an agreement not to resort to war. But Herr Hitler, evidently, does not want anything of the kind. It is part of his policy, indeed one of his fundamental principles, that Germany should be completely free ‘to throw her weight about’. What his purpose is, is clear enough up to a point: he desires to establish a

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German hegemony in Europe. But what that hegemony really involves — whether it involves, for instance, the reduction of France and Italy and England to the condition of vassal states — probably Herr Hitler himself does not clearly know. In this regard he is the soldier of fortune and the servant of destiny, borne on by a racial mysticism. But, quite apart from his dreams and desires, it is self-evident that nothing can, and nothing ought to, prevent Germany from becoming the most powerful single nation in Europe.

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If, therefore, ‘understanding’ between England and Germany implies anything more than *ad hoc* agreement — such as the agreement at Munich, or the kind of ‘understanding’ that prevailed between England and Russia before the war — it is surely a will-o’-the-wisp. Herr Hitler repudiates the idea as one without solid content; and one is compelled to agree with him. The blessed word ‘understanding’ has all kinds of overtones for an English ear which it does not possess for the ear of a Nazi German. It is these overtones which are delusive. For Mr. Chamberlain, the agreement at Munich was a prelude to further ‘understanding’ — hence his rather pathetic insistence on the ‘additional document’: for Herr Hitler, it was nothing of the kind — merely, an *ad hoc* agreement which spared him the trouble and the danger of making war. He has gone out of his way to show how little he regarded it as a

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prelude to a more genuine ‘understanding’ by his ruthless attack upon the Jews.

And, in fact, if ‘understanding’ between England and Germany means a relation of the same kind between them as exists between England and France, or either of these countries and America, it is quite impossible. ‘Understanding’ in the psychological or moral sense is inconceivable between a country based on the German system and a democracy like our own. They are heterogeneous social organisms. The unity and strength of Nazi Germany is based upon the deliberate replacement of the democratic satisfaction, which is the exercise of responsible freedom, by an entirely different satisfaction, namely, the pride of being a member of a martial and conquering race. It is blindness to deny that the pride of belonging to a conquering race is a real satisfaction. We may be — though not many of us are — deeply convinced that it ought not to be; but the fact remains that it is. It is so real a satisfaction that men are willing to make very grievous sacrifices for it. Therefore, it may perfectly well serve as the efficient motive of social coherence. True, such a motive creates a regiment rather than a society, as we understand the word; but a racial regiment is, sociologically speaking, a viable form of society. There is no sociological reason to suppose that it lacks the power to exist and endure.

These considerations are concealed from the Englishman — much more than the Frenchman, who remembers Napoleon — by the historic fact that the British achievement of empire and the British achieve-

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ment of democracy were concomitant. England was fortunate in that it experienced the different satisfactions of an advance towards democracy and an advance to the position of a ruling race simultaneously. Thus an Englishman finds it hard to distinguish between these satisfactions; it strikes him as perverse and unnatural to regard them as mutually exclusive (as they are regarded in Germany) and he can hardly believe that the pride of the martial and conquering race is an effective substitute for democratic freedom as the ideal motive of social solidarity. Hence proceeds a double misunderstanding. The Englishman underestimates the solidity of Nazi Germany; and the German misunderstands the nature of the British Empire. The British Empire is not an empire at all in the Hitlerian sense, nor in any ancient sense of the word; it is largely a federation of sovereign democracies, speaking the same language, and governed on the same political system. The Hitlerian conception of empire applied to the British Empire would result in its instant dissolution. The attempt to change it into a military empire would wreck it.

But an 'understanding' — as distinct from a negotiated treaty — between a racial regiment and a democratic society is surely impossible. It is not true to say that in the quest for 'understanding' between nations their forms of government are indifferent, because human beings are — just human beings. Under modern conditions of social integration this has become a good deal less than a half-truth. The human being in a racial regiment is a different kind of human being

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from one in a democratic society: the human essence, to use Marx's expression, is not the same in those two ensembles of social relations. The individual German who in private intercourse appears to be frank and *gemütlich* as ever is a strange psychological phenomenon: he takes no responsibility for the regime under which he lives, and affects to regard it as something remote from himself, although his life is being far more intimately shaped and controlled by the government than ever before. The effect of this is quite different from that of an autocratic and absolutist regime of the old style, where the government really was remote from the individual: it was certainly not controlled by him, but neither did it control him. Under a semi-feudal absolutism the life-process of the individual, though it evolved within very narrow limits, was largely autonomous; under Nazi totalitarianism the autonomy is surrendered to the extremest possible degree. The difference is that National-Socialism is a regime based on the conscious abandonment of responsibility by the individual. He deliberately de-individualizes himself, or suffers himself to be de-individualized. The fantastic lengths to which German propaganda can be carried without provoking any intellectual revolt is one of the grimdest phenomena of the post-war world. Herr Goebbels is a truly sinister figure in European history.

But it is wishful-thinking which assures us that the average German is unhappy under the new regime. The German man has always had a respect and liking for authoritative government, and has been for the

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best part of a century rather contemptuous than otherwise of sovereign democracy. Much of the best democratic blood in Germany emigrated after the fiasco of 1848, and went to build up the sturdy democracy of the American Middle West. And the evidence (however unpalatable it may be to the emancipated woman of western democracy) is that the majority of German women are happier than they were before at being relegated to domesticity and child-bearing. It is at least a possibility that the way of life encouraged, or imposed, in Nazi Germany is more in accordance with the ordinary person's sense of fitness, and more satisfying to his natural desires, than the way of life which capitalist democracy in England offers to its average citizen. Assuredly, it is self-delusion to suppose that the average German is as discontented with his lot as — let us say — the readers of the *New Statesman* think he ought to be. Moreover, unless democracy begins to set its own house in order and to take as much thought for the real happiness of the common man as National-Socialism does, the time may quickly come when the English masses will be eager to follow the pied piper's tune.

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Nevertheless, the underlying fact is that 'understanding', of the spiritual and durable sort, is unattainable between a country which deliberately repudiates universalism and a democracy. Democracy, whose values

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are ultimately Christian, does aspire towards ‘the parliament of man and the federation of the world’; and this aspiration is not merely platonic, but inherent in the ‘idea’ of democracy. No democracy will ever be finally secure, until the world is a federation of democracies. Nationalist totalitarianism, on the other hand, becomes the more insecure with every nation that succumbs to it: every proselyte becomes an enemy. Therefore, the word ‘understanding’ as used by a democratic leader is incomprehensible to the Nazi Führer; it belongs to a whole system of ideas which he repudiates^a — of which the chief is that the nations of the world are potential members of a world-community in somewhat the same sense as men are potential members of the Kingdom of God for the Christian. Just as it is in virtue of this potentiality that the individual person has dignity and meaning in Christian eyes, so the *raison d'être* of a nation is membership of the world-community. Except in relation to that final purpose ‘understanding’ between nations is meaningless.

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The universalism implicit in democracy is the ethico-political counterpart of the economic universalism which is implicit in capitalist industrial life-production. As capitalism cannot continue to be competitive without destroying itself, so democracy cannot be imperialistic without destroying itself: the classical example is the fate of the Athenian empire. But ancient

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democracy and modern democracy are different things, and the relevant example of the inherent contradiction between democracy and imperialism is the British 'Empire', which has had to become substantially a federation of democracies. In no other form could it be developed, as the American Revolution showed. So that the last major imperial problem that besets us is the democratization of India. On the other hand, the only kind of empire of which Nazi Germany is capable is an empire of subjugation, not of colonization. But — psychologically — the very cult of racial mysticism by which Germany has made itself powerful would probably be a fatal impediment (even if no others existed) to its achieving an empire of subjugation. For even a fanatical Nazi is bound to feel that other races exist in their own right, and are in the last resort unannihilable. Viable empire depends upon precisely that capacity for assimilation — cultural and racial — which German racialism repudiates. The consciously exclusive racial unity is sterile as an imperial race. Its potency is not constructive, but destructive. Therefore, either Germany will fail completely to create an empire, or in the measure to which it succeeds it will be compelled to abandon its exclusiveness.

The mistake of the democracies is to be afraid of Germany. Granted that Germany's technical powers of destruction are now tremendous, her power of spiritual attraction is very small. Even if she were to provoke an international war — and without her initiative there will not be one — and supposing she

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were victorious in it, she would be still less able to consolidate her victory than were the allied democracies after the war of 1914-18. Practically, by far the best thing England and France could do would be to reduce their armaments to the level required for police-duties only, and to summon up sufficient faith in their political systems and their cultures to suffer Germany to do her worst. The worst that Germany could do would be little in comparison with the incalculable harm the democracies are inflicting upon themselves by the diversion of the greater part of their productive powers into instruments of destruction. If they could but find in themselves sufficient courage to devote one-half of those squandered powers of production to the realization of some substantial social justice — to what we have called the filling of the democratic form with a democratic content — they would do more in a year to paralyse the German menace than they will do in twenty spent in piling up armaments, which they dread to be forced to use.

What we need is a positive and religious faith in democracy, not as a mere mechanism of government (for as a mechanism of government it is certainly not more, but rather less, efficient than its totalitarian rivals), but as the political expression of the enduring principle that the true end of man is responsible freedom. Positive faith in democracy consists in the power to recognize that this is the vital principle of democracy and to distinguish it clearly amid the inertias under which it is obscured and smothered in actual democracy, wherein only a small minority behave with

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the conscious responsibility of freedom. In the degree to which democracy becomes aware of its own essence, it will see its goal — ‘like a tall sea-mark standing every flaw’ — amid the confusions of policy which now threaten it. Historically, we need to understand that democracy is only at the beginning of its evolution, not at the end of it. It is still in the stage of a political experiment, a recent emergence in the bio-political evolutionary process. Modern democracy is barely fifty years old, a mere sapling. And at the present moment it is in a situation of extraordinary danger. Largely owing to the fearful failure of democracy in 1918 to be conscious of its own responsibility and loyal to its own inherent universalism, a powerful anti-democratic movement has sprung into existence, deliberately repudiating the principle on which democracy is based and, owing to that repudiation, strong in destructive potentiality. The threat to democracy is the more insidious, because democracy seems to be compelled, in its own defence, to follow the anti-democratic countries in the organization of totalitarian destruction. The initiative seems to have passed to the anti-democracies.

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This is a fatal condition for the democracies. At all costs they must seize the moral initiative again. If they fail to regain it, they will be dragged passive and uncomprehending behind the chariot-wheels of a death-process. Mr. Chamberlain’s action at Munich is

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perhaps to be interpreted as an instinctive attempt to regain the moral initiative for democracy. But the attempt was instinctive merely; it was not strengthened and purified by the imaginative reason. Hence the effect has been disastrously weakened not only by the campaign for intensive and indiscriminate rearmament — with its devastating implication that we sought peace only because we were unprepared for war — but by a striking failure to make an articulate appeal to the moral imagination of the world. We are not suggesting that any of Mr. Chamberlain's rival politicians would have done better; for all we know they might have done worse. But it is imperative that the respite won for international peace should be used to reach a far deeper understanding of the situation, and a realization that opportunism is not enough: an unremitting effort must be made to grasp, and strengthen our hold upon, the moral initiative.

The optimum of moral initiative on behalf of democracy consists in a complete withdrawal from the armaments race, proceeding from the simultaneous realization, first, that the vital principle of democracy — the effort to implement in political institution the Christian reverence for the individual person — is directly negated by participation in totalitarian war, and second, that the strength of the anti-democracies derives from the fear which had been exploited to induce their citizens to surrender their responsible freedom. But it must be acknowledged that the democracies are not prepared for this optimum of moral initiative and that nothing less than a mighty

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rebirth of Christianity could prepare them for it: a renewal, in millions of individual lives, of the actual experience that 'perfect love casts out fear'. We must not put this aside as a dream. It is to be laboured for, every day, by those who believe that it is true. But we have also to acknowledge that it is not practical politics in 1939. We are not ready to take the optimum moral initiative.

But if only we could admit to our souls that that is the optimum moral initiative, we should at least have a clue to the kind and quality of the moral initiative we must take, in the realm of practical politics. It must be a genuine moral initiative directed manifestly towards the good, and it must involve a sacrifice. No initiative for good can be taken without sacrifice. And the democracies need to make it clear that they are prepared to make some real sacrifice for the good. We need a policy which indicates plainly to ourselves and to the world that we know where we wish to go, and that we are trying to go there. Two such opportunities of a practical moral initiative are outstanding. The first is that we should pledge ourselves by a solemn declaration that, under no circumstances, however desperate, will we resort to the use of the bombing aeroplane upon the territories of another nation, because we believe that the indiscriminate slaughter it necessitates is intolerable to the civilized conscience. We may be bombed, but we will not bomb. The second is to recognize that the democracies have a responsibility for the refugees from totalitarian persecution, and to declare that we are prepared to take our

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just share, proportionate to our resources, in the sacrifice involved in securing to them an opportunity to live; that we expect that the other democracies will, in concert with us, accept their share of the responsibility. But we do not propose to make our action conditional upon theirs. If they will not join us in apportioning the refugees, we will fix our fair share ourselves and go ahead.

Such a resumption of the moral initiative which, in times past, it possessed by the mere fact of being democracy, is necessary to democracy to-day. Until twenty years ago the position had been unchallenged for a century that democracy was the highest form of political society. It was the failure of the fact to fulfil the form — ignobly manifest at Versailles — that led to the overthrow of nascent democracy in Germany and Italy; thenceforward, democracy has been under the necessity, which it has not recognized, of deliberately taking the moral initiative which was no longer inherent in it. The claim of democracy to be the final form of society is no longer tacitly admitted, but categorically denied. In this situation, it is imperative that democracy shall take the moral initiative; but it is futile to imagine that the moral initiative consists in seeking ‘understanding’ with the anti-democracies. If ‘understanding’ means something more than the hard diplomatic bargains which have always been necessary in foreign relations, it is unattainable. If that is all it means, it is not a moral initiative. Equally futile is it to imagine that the moral initiative consists in attempting to make war upon the anti-democracies.

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Mr. Chamberlain's actual behaviour during the Czecho-Slovak crisis and his words, suggest that he is not unaware of the necessity of this moral initiative. But his awareness seems partial, and his language leads one to suspect a certain obtuseness in moral discrimination. Thus in his Mansion House speech of November 9th, 1938, he described himself as 'a go-getter for peace'. The intention is, perhaps, the right one; but the language is embarrassing — even disquieting. This is not a matter of literary taste. Peace is a delicate matter in contemporary Europe, and the language of salesmanship is inadequate to its problems. Moreover, there is some ground for supposing that this crudeness of expression covers a real, and dangerous confusion in Mr. Chamberlain's mind concerning the nature of peace. He appears to regard it as something which can be measured quantitatively; and to be partly under the influence of the notion that the conclusion of separate non-aggression pacts — *ad hoc* agreements, as we have called them — is identical with the partial achievement of European peace. This is an illusion: it is in fact very doubtful whether either the declaration appended to the Munich agreement (to which Mr. Chamberlain believes that insufficient importance has been ascribed) or the Anglo-

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Italian agreement, have been positive contributions to the peace of Europe. In the policy of the totalitarian leaders, separate non-aggression pacts are often only expedients to neutralize one country in order to be free to bring additional pressure upon another; they are by no means necessarily a prelude to a more comprehensive peace.

Mr. Chamberlain appears to assume that every separate peace-agreement increases the total quantity of peace in Europe, every separate 'understanding' the total amount of 'understanding'. It is difficult to believe that the Prime Minister of Great Britain is under such a delusion; but that is certainly the impression produced by much of his language and many of his acts. Peace is, at any rate, about the last thing in the world to be measured quantitatively; 'that piecemeal peace is poor peace', as Father Hopkins wrote. For peace is a spirit, it is universal in intention, and depends on at least a partial community of idea and ideal. Peace of this kind, positive and inclusive, has to be created in the world to-day, when it is openly repudiated even as an ideal; and it can be created only by preparedness for sacrifice — of self, not of others.

But we insist again, the beginning of our salvation is to recognize in a spirit of religious repentance, that we English are supremely responsible for the condition of Europe to-day. The responsibility for the starvation of Germany after the signing of the Armistice rests primarily upon us; upon us primarily rests the responsibility for the peace treaty, with its iniquitous and

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unprecedented clause compelling Germany to acknowledge that she bore the guilt of the war, whereas the guilt of it fell at least as heavily upon Russia as upon Germany. Nor can we unload our responsibility upon the shoulders of France; for even if it were true (which is doubtful) that France was more vindictive than we were, we had the power to constrain France to accept our view. We appear to have no difficulty in so constraining her in the case of Spain. It is primarily our injustice, our betrayal of the principles of morality and humanity, which we professed to hold sacred, that has conjured up the spirit of cynical savagery with which we shall, in vain, seek an 'understanding' to-day. And I believe that until an English Prime Minister has the moral courage to proclaim that Germany was no more morally guilty than we were ourselves for the war of 1914-18, and that therefore the punitive peace which followed it had no moral sanction at all, but was simply might masquerading as right, and that it must be replaced by a peace which has moral sanction, there will be no possibility of our touching that level in the German psyche wherein alone a durable 'understanding' can take root.

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THE notion that national repentance is the clue for the right policy of British democracy will, I fear, seem to many far-fetched and unrealistic. National repentance is not a condition recognized by modern politics or sociology. Their tacit assumption is that societies make mistakes, but they do not commit sins. They are unintelligent, but they are never wicked. True, this all-pervasive rationalism is beginning to wear thin in places; and it is already difficult for the most emancipated progressive (unless he is a member of the British Cabinet) to confine himself to saying that the Nazi treatment of the Jews is merely stupid. Besides, perhaps it is not stupid at all, any more than is the extermination of 'Trotskyists' in Russia. What is more certain about these activities is that they are sins — crimes against God. And possibly under the compulsion of descriptive accuracy, Christian categories will return to common usage.

It is implicit in the argument of this book that a Christian understanding is the only secure guide for democratic policy, because democracy itself can be understood only from the Christian point of view. If we regard democracy from any other angle it becomes an irrational monstrosity, and cannot finally escape the kind of contemptuous condemnation it receives

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from modern totalitarianism. Unless democracy is regarded as the form of government which is based on the conviction that the aim of human community is to promote the fullest development of the person towards his highest end, namely the exercise of responsible freedom, it is surely impossible to justify it at all. Democracy stands or falls, before the critical imagination, by the strength of our conviction of the necessity of freedom, and that depends upon the truth of our conception of the freedom that is necessary. Democracy marks the formal permeation of the social order by the principle that we are members one of another. It is based upon an act of faith, namely, the faith that we realize our true freedom only in willing to behave as members one of another. That faith is, for the few, partly corroborated by experience; it is in fact, impossible for these to feel free save in so far as their capacities are used for the service of their fellow-men, and the only demand they would make upon society is that it should protect and secure them in this effort. But even the most highly developed citizen of democracy labours under the immense limitation imposed by the inertia of society. That inertia, which is indeed colossal, derives from the fact that for the majority of its citizens society is only a means for self-aggrandizement. It is themselves that they wish to enlarge, and their conception of freedom is the degraded one of freedom to assert themselves, to have what they want and to do as they will. And democracy is valuable to them because it gives them more of this freedom than any other ordering of society.

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This freedom is pernicious, alike to man and to society. If this conception of freedom permanently gains the upper hand (as it seems to have done in actual democracy), then it must inevitably destroy itself, because society will react convulsively against the moral and material anarchy which such freedom cannot fail to create. At the present moment, in the remaining actual democracies, the moral anarchy is more in evidence than the material anarchy; but that is mainly because they have been spared the severer forms of strain, from which they have been protected (as though by a padding of fat or cotton-wool) by the accumulated wealth which accrued to them during the period when they alone enjoyed the increase of energy which derived from their freedom. It is the old-established democracies which have survived; but the significance of the fact is ambiguous. There cannot be many thoughtful men who believe that they survive to-day because of their moral strength. The moral strength may still be there, latent in them: but if it is not there, they are surely doomed. The first necessary step towards discovering their strength and collecting it, if it exists, is a conscious struggle against their moral anarchy.

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Such a struggle involves the passing from the habit of irresponsible freedom to the clear imagination of responsible freedom. That transformation, we main-

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tain, is not possible without a rebirth of the Christian consciousness: for without that rebirth of the Christian consciousness the conception that the pursuit of self-interest is destructive of freedom can gain no effective and permanent lodgment in men's souls. It belongs to an order of thought and experience to which men, who have repudiated the Christian view of man, can with difficulty gain access. They need to have at least their minds prepared to entertain the possibility that the supreme moral achievement consists in voluntary self-abnegation. This is not to suggest that Christian sainthood and Christian heroism are likely to become widespread in our time; they will not. The change for which we must struggle is much more modest. It is the re-creation of an attitude of mind for which Christian sainthood and Christian heroism are saintly and heroic—and not the eccentricities of unenlightened and life-denying fools. For that is really the modern attitude towards them. It is not expressed so bluntly. It might be better if it were, because there would be more chance of a reaction against it. The notion that Christian heroism is the highest manifestation of life has quietly disappeared from the modern consciousness.

Yet, unless this ideal is set again on the pinnacle where it belongs, there is not much hope of swinging the balance of society from the dull habit of irresponsible freedom to the clear imagination of responsible freedom. Unless we can re-establish the trend of Christian effort and the practice of Christian self-criticism as normative throughout society, there is (I

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believe) no chance of our finally escaping totalitarianism. For an old-established democracy is a nursery-bed of hypocrisies. We have to be on our guard against the predominance of a temper which, under the pretence of manifesting responsible freedom, achieves a more subtle combination of self-interest and noble profession than before. A simple example may suffice. Every year, and every day of the year, the state becomes stronger in a modern society; and the numbers increase of those who enter into the service of the state. They are removed from the insecurity which is typical of social existence to-day, and at the same time they are powerfully tempted to the illusion that they more than others are servants of society: unconsciously, unwittingly, they become exponents of the comfortable faith of salvation without sacrifice. Such an ethos in the present situation can have but one final outcome, a servile society — unless it is consciously combated by an allegiance to Christian values, and an incessant self-criticism in the light of the Christian imagination. Even though to-day the actual condition of society is neutral, it is being directed by the secret minds of men towards one of the two alternatives — a society consciously inspired by Christianity, or one that is unconsciously inspired by the Prince of this World. A society is Satanic when it is permeated by the pursuit of power for its own sake; a society is struggling to be Christian when power (whether that of the community or its members) is regarded as purely instrumental towards promoting the responsible freedom of men.

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Those are the alternatives towards one or other of which a democratic society must be moving to-day; every person who does not employ his margin of responsible freedom in struggling to make the latter conception prevail is contributing to the victory of the former. This is a crisis in the affairs of men when, not least because Christianity has been completely deposed from practical influence upon society, Christ is saying to humanity: 'He who is not with me is against me.' To say that to-day we are threatened with a complete and final breach with the tradition of Christian civilization is inadequate; it is much nearer the truth to say that the breach has actually occurred. The crash of the thin fabric of international morality into pure cynicism in the last twenty years has been, in the literal sense of the word, prodigious; and no sign of the times is more characteristic or more disquieting than the fact that the present Foreign Secretary is a zealous and sincere Churchman. My imagination may be unduly sensitive, but I cannot help regarding Lord Halifax's complicity in the cruel farce of non-intervention in Spain, as an indication of the unconscious depravity of conventional Christianity. It is submissive before the cynicism of brutality; and there appears to be no point to-day at which the Christian conscience is prepared to assert its own existence so as to create a focus of resistance to the descent into the abyss.

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The peculiar bitterness of the situation arises not so much from a refusal as from an incapacity to recognize its causes. Our treatment of Germany after the war has corrupted our national morality, as well as poisoned the springs of humanity in Europe. The war simultaneously accelerated the economic integration of the country — that is, made the nation a closer economic unity — and debased the moral consciousness of its people. We have but to compare the treatment of the enemy after the Boer War in 1907 and the treatment of Germany in 1918. It is true that the two wars were very different. In the second our national existence was seriously menaced, and the necessary unification of the national economy and the national will did not permit the crystallization of a significant opposition to the war-demagogery of Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Northcliffe. Coalition government takes the conscience out of representative democracy. The only hope was that Mr. Lloyd George, as the leader of the coalition, should have given the country a moral lead: he failed completely to do this. And the evil done by a democracy unable to function as a democracy has shattered the international society of Europe. Not only is this the case, but since that time coalition government has almost become endemic in England, and the unimaginativeness of the Labour party is likely to make impossible the creation of a genuine opposition which is a practical moral self-criticism of

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democracy. That is to say, at a time when it is imperative that the world-situation should be understood in terms of good and evil, when the realization on the national scale that 'the wages of sin is death' is the condition of salvation, not only is the religious consciousness completely decayed, but the practical means of giving expression to the moral conscience of the nation is seriously impaired.

This is to take an ethical or religious view of recent history. Common to Right and Left to-day is the assumption that ethics and religion have no relevance to modern history. This assumption is not criticized because the point of vantage whence it can be criticized has been abandoned. But the fact is that men combine to create a history from which ethics and religion are excluded, and think themselves realists because they see that ethics and religion have no obvious relevance to the product. Nevertheless, the truth of morality and religion, which is absolute, cannot be cheated in that way. We do not escape from the dominion of sin by refusing to admit its existence; we only plunge the more deeply into it. A political situation to which morality and religion have no relevance is one whose end is death. If men's minds are so insensitive and so complacent that they cannot feel the imminence of a divine judgment in the modern world-constellation, if they must have a sign, other than the signs of the times, it seems as certain as it seems just that no sign shall be given them.

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At the beginning of this book the Fascist and National Socialist systems were described as gangster-governments. They are; but they can be thus condemned only from the point of view of Christian democracy. When they are compared with the actual democracies — the democracies which have signally failed in self-knowledge and self-discipline, and revealed themselves at the great crisis of modern history as animated by blind hatred and the savage desire for revenge — it is quite impossible to condemn Fascism and National Socialism in this fashion. We are, or pretend to be, indignant to-day over the German treatment of the Jews: but we never ask ourselves how we treated the German people during the hunger-blockade after the Armistice. What *right* have we to be indignant over the organized and deliberate cruelty of Germany to the Jews? We committed the same organized and deliberate cruelty against the whole German people in 1919. And what evidence is there that our indignation is really more than the pious humbug the average German believes it to be? A collection of £400,000? The one evidence that would convince him that our indignation was genuine is that the British nation should assume responsibility for the refugees. If we do not do that, the average German will believe that our indignation is pious humbug — another effort of that brilliant moral propaganda to which the Germans attribute their defeat in the war.

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And surely, in believing this the average German will not be altogether wrong.

The difference between England and Germany, on the level of actual behaviour, is that the brutality of Germany is honest, and the brutality of England is concealed. If the government of Germany is a gangster government, ours is one that just keeps within the law. The frank repudiation of Christianity by Germany is merely more honest than the profession of Christianity by our own practically atheistic society. The Germans believe in God, as manifest in the German destiny, and they believe in his prophet, Adolf Hitler. We profess to be shocked. But why? The question to be asked is whether *we* believe in any God at all. Our Christianity is professional. It is a vested interest — a solidly established department of capitalist society. The existence of the Christian Church in England is no more evidence that we believe in God than the existence of the Inns of Court is evidence that we believe in Justice. How many people would believe in God in England if there was no longer a living to be made out of Him?

That sounds brutal; and I much prefer to be brutal about myself than about other people. I know what a cowardly Christian I am, and that it ill becomes me to discern a mote in my brother's eye, when I cannot remove the beam from my own. But my effort is to awaken myself and others out of a lethargy — to shock myself and others out of the habit of mere indignation with Germany. Germany is un-Christian. True, but so are we. Germany is brutal. True, but so are we.

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Germany is honest. True, but are we? Against that German honesty — perhaps stupid frankness is a better word — in un-Christianity and brutality what have we to set in the balance? Only our democracy. And what is our democracy? What would be left of it to-day if we had had to endure what Germany endured for the twenty years after the war? Would anything have been left of it at all?

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Yet I believe in democracy; I believe that it is the noblest form of society. But I also believe that we have scarcely even begun to realize what arduous demands a living democracy makes upon its members. Whether our British democracy has in it the capacity and will to be a living democracy, and not a dying one as it is to-day, I cannot tell. But I am sure that a great number of those who now profess to 'believe in democracy' will be appalled if ever they realize the price they are required to pay for being members of a genuinely democratic society. I fear that, when the trial comes, as come it surely will, this great army of nominal democrats will turn upon democracy just as they will turn upon Christianity. So long as democracy and Christianity are compatible with the pursuit of their own private interests, so long will they profess to be Christians and democrats. But when the moment for sacrifice arrives, they will desert in a body to the pagan and authoritarian enemy.

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Yet beyond these I believe there exists, in this society of England, another great body of genuinely bewildered men, who desire the good and are prepared to make sacrifices for the good, if only they knew the way. God knows, it is not easy to find the way in this complex and confused age, when it is left to the forces of necessity to shape the course of history. My complaint is that those whose duty it was, if not to guide men's minds, to seek guidance for them, have neglected their task of trying to lift men's actions out of the flux of necessity. I believe that the Christian Church would be in a different position in the world to-day, and in men's hearts, if it had striven to reach the truth: it would have been purified and strengthened by the effort, and it would have given faith to many men, once young and generous but now disillusioned. For if what I believe to be the truth is true, namely that Christianity and democracy are dependent upon one another, so that democracy can be faithful only where Christianity is faithful, and Christianity be living only where democracy is living too, then by fearlessly facing — in the spirit of the Gospel — the moral anarchy of the present time the Christian Church might have lost respectability, but it would have gained authority. It would have become the lodestar for the thousands of bewildered and generous minds upon whom the future of democracy depends.

For only the Christian Church, or Christ in the hearts of men, can speak the word of truth concerning our present chaos. That chaos, which we feel beating about our souls when we can be quiet enough to listen,

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is chiefly created because the words of counsel that are given are superficial; they deal with the symptoms and not the disease. We tinker with the symptoms here, and the disease bursts out again in another place. The word which will speak to our condition is the word that searches the heart. The words of conventional Christianity no longer have power to search men's hearts. They are addressed to the individual, and the individual does not exist. The individual has first to be re-created. His essence has to be disentangled from the vast nexus of necessity in which it is lost. It is that disentangling of the individual from 'the body of this death' which is the supreme task of Christianity to-day, and which it has so grievously neglected. Without that the Christian message is meaningless; it has no depth of earth to root in.

Depth of earth, depth of understanding, depth of imagination: these are the first requisites of the Christian faith to-day. We have to lose our lives to save them. We have to sacrifice our ideas of the individual to gain the reality of the person, to whom alone Christ can be all in all. And if this sounds recondite, it is the fault of the writer. It is simple. It means simply that in the world to-day we cannot repent as individuals, unless we repent as a nation. And that again, though it too may sound recondite or impossible, is simple. There are things we can do, and which we know we ought to do, as a nation, or the opportunity will be lost for ever. Let us do them without delay. Let us set our feet, as a nation, in the road of life, and take them out of the road of death.

CHAPTER XVI

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DEMOCRACY is not a simple conception or a simple system. It is perhaps natural for a people whose tradition is 'democratic' (in a vague and changing sense) to assume that democracy works well, and will go on working well for ever; and that the time will never come when Englishmen will not be electing their representatives to the High Court of Parliament. But the truth is that British democracy is working badly and has worked badly for more than twenty years. The evidence is accumulating that modern mass-democracy is an unworkable system of government in a world of advanced capitalist development, because it makes too heavy a demand on the understanding and imagination of the average man. When we soberly contemplate how little of these necessary qualities is possessed by the average political leader in England to-day, it is hard to believe that the democratic citizen who accepts such leadership 'as from another place' will easily become capable of exercising his political power imaginatively enough to abandon the anarchy of capitalism without abandoning responsible freedom at the same time.

The only substitute for a power of imagination which neither leaders nor led possess is a fidelity to the principles of Christian morality which both have

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abandoned. To speak of the latter as a substitute for the former is a *façon de parler*. They are in fact identical. Reason in facing the necessities of the present situation is compelled to become imaginative, and the imaginative reason expresses itself in the effort to follow Christian morality. Let us take our crucial example. The peace-making of 1918-19 was the decisive moment of modern history — the decisive moral trial of the great democracies. No purely rational considerations would have served the democracies one half so well, no calculation could have done one half so much to consolidate the peace of Europe, as the absolutely simple sense of the distinction between good and evil according to the Christian gospel. If democracy loses that sense completely, it is doomed. For, as we have shown, the significance of the achievement of democracy, its justification and its judgment, is that a people thereby enters, as a whole, into the condition of responsible freedom: it 'knows good and evil'. The democratic nation is become a moral person. If, having entered this realm, it loses the sense of the distinction between good and evil in its relations to other national 'persons', it destroys its own *raison d'être*. To choose the evil, at this level of political existence, is to kill its own soul, to deaden the quick of life within it.

This may sound exalted and visionary; but it is, and will increasingly be found to be, a matter of simple experience. By an inevitable law, unless an heroic effort is made to reassert our allegiance as a nation to Christian morality, our democratic freedoms will be taken from us. 'From him that hath not, it shall be

taken away, even that which he hath.' No power on earth can preserve democracy in a country which repudiates the effort to establish a relation of Christian morality with the neighbour nations.

Prior to the end of the nineteenth century, which is the moment at which complete democracy was achieved in some of the leading nations, the relations between the European nations were kept within the realm of morality largely by the dynastic connection between the sovereigns. This was not, of course, the realm of Christian morality, but rather the realm of the natural morality of the family; but it was a realm of morality. The development of democracy dissipated the power and authority of the sovereign. The last great dynastic monarchs — the German Kaiser, the Tsar of Russia, and the Emperor of Austria — were overthrown in the Great War. It was a necessary corollary of the victory of the democracies that international relations should now be established on the basis that the nations themselves were moral persons and fellow-members of the society of nations. If this attempt was not seriously made, then the condition of the world would definitely deteriorate from what it was under the old system of dynastic connections. International relations would pass out of the realm of morality altogether — as they have done. The democratic victors preferred revenge to justice, disgusted the moral idealism of the United States, but for whom they would have lost the war, and filled the heart of Germany with hatred. Thus, in their evil pride and moral blindness, they undermined the only system by which

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they themselves could hope to survive, as democracies.

In a world in which the decisive international relations are reduced to savagery as they are to-day, when there is no longer even the pretence that treaty obligations are binding, or that the great powers are engaged in anything but a total preparation of themselves for war against one another, it is foolishness to pretend that democracy can survive, except perhaps as an empty ritual of government. Not only is the administrative concentration required by war-preparation of this kind with difficulty susceptible of effective democratic control, but the moral atmosphere of preparation for totalitarian war, in which every pretence of Christianity or common humanity will be abandoned, is lethal to the inward life of democracy; it must produce a definite atrophy of the imagination. The mass of democratic citizens become a panic-stricken herd, and the fact that they possess a vote apiece does not change their condition. They become incapable of that exercise of responsible freedom without which democracy degenerates into a mechanism for surrendering to irresponsible mass-moods. In the strained condition of preparation for totalitarian war the domination of the irresponsible mass-mood is almost certain. Thus democracy will destroy itself.

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Hence, if 'the defence of democracy' is not to be the destruction of democracy, it must be conceived on a

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different plane entirely. If it is conceived 'realistically' in such a situation as we have to-day — a situation which is what it is because of the disloyalty of the democracies to their own principles, and their ignorance of the necessary conditions of their own existence — it becomes an evil delusion. By defending an isolated England to-day, we are not defending democracy at all, we are merely collaborating in the European anarchy which we chiefly helped to create. The only way by which we can be assured that we are defending democracy in fact is by returning to the simple distinction between good and evil which we abandoned twenty years ago. Only by a rebirth of a moral sense, and a manifest subordination of our policy to considerations of simple morality and not of national existence, can England live. An England which in the contemporary situation seeks solely to secure its national existence will cease to be England. It will represent no universal idea, and be sustained by no universal life.

Thus we return to our former conclusion: the clue to the crisis in which we are involved is to understand that we have entered on a phase of history in which our national experience can be comprehended only in religious, that is to say, Christian terms. Of us as a nation, as a political entity, it is literally true that we must first seek the Kingdom of God, and all these things will be added unto us. The only way we can secure our national existence is by regarding its security as a secondary matter. We must be prepared, and willing, as a nation to lose our life to save

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it. Our hope of life is to make ourselves the champions of Christian justice in the world.

Those who do not dismiss this conviction out of hand as the dream of a religious fanatic may well ask a question. Why, if this be true of the world-situation to-day, was it not always true? How comes it that we have entered into a *new* phase of history, in which this strange truth is true? That question, we believe, has been implicitly answered already. But we will answer it again. Democracy is irrational and absurd except it be understood as an approximation of the earthly society towards the Kingdom of God. It is that, or it is a monstrosity. And even those who are faithful democrats, but not Christians, really hold to the truth which is expressed by the Christian imagination in those words. The war of 1914-18 marked the final phase in the achievement of democracy. Democracy was victorious in Europe. The existing and victorious democracies, justly victorious, victorious because they were democracies, victorious because the universal faith in democracy was on their side, betrayed the Christian principle of democracy in the moment of victory. Instead of establishing a juster peace than Europe had hitherto known, they imposed the most monstrous peace in modern history. Into what might and should have been a new world — not in the sense of a Utopia, but a world based on a new and more Christian relation between the nations — they introduced a seething mass of inhuman cruelty (the food-blockade) and evil (the determination to crush Germany so that she could not rise again). No crime on

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such a scale has been committed by one group of nations upon another since Christendom began. It was an unprecedented sin, unique in history, because committed at the moment when there was the profession and the possibility of entering into a new kind of international relations, of which the principle was Christian. That is to say, the present phase of European history begins with and is conditioned by the most deliberate repudiation of Christian principles of which European history holds record. If we do not understand the situation as a decisive moment in the history of Christendom, we do not understand it at all; and only action which proceeds from such an understanding can put a period to a process which must otherwise be one of incessant deterioration.

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The democratic movement, therefore, if it is to overcome inertia and resist despair, is compelled by the necessities of the internal and the external situation to become a religious movement — that is, a movement which applies Christian criteria to the relations between man and man and between nation and nation. What that immediately involves for our national policy we have already indicated; what it involves within the nation we have also tried to show. We will now try to elaborate this by more detailed examples, but without any intention or pretension of comprehensiveness. For it will be manifest to those who accept

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the reasoning in this book, first, that the ‘democratic movement’ envisaged here is not a political movement in the ordinary sense at all: it is not a movement of the Left against the Right, or the Right against the Left, or the Centre against both. In England, nominally at least, all men are democrats, and the democracy which is investigated and analysed here is the common possession of all British citizens. The presuppositions and the consequences of the faith which is actually professed by Conservatism and Liberalism and Labour have been our concern. Secondly it will be evident that our aim is to persuade men of the necessity not of a programme but of an attitude — what we have called the politics of repentance.

It is obvious, we think, that a ‘democratic movement’ of this kind, having its origin in a motion of religious understanding and repentance, will seek to propagate itself by other than conventional political methods. Its object is to make democracy, in the individual citizen of democracy, conscious of itself as the embodiment of a real and living faith, springing directly from a Christian origin. It is eloquent of the age in which we live that the very phrase ‘faith in democracy’ suggests not an increase in awareness of reality but an increase in the evasion of reality. If a man says that he has ‘faith’ in democracy, the odds are heavy to-day that it is a sanctimonious way of saying that he is quite content with things as they are, and intends to do nothing at all to change them. ‘Faith in democracy’ is the commonest apology for inertia. When we say that democracy, in the individual

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democrat, must become conscious of itself as a real and living faith, we mean the opposite of this.

We mean that the duty of the individual democrat to-day is to seek, in a spirit of religious self-devotion, to bring democracy into being. He has truly to regard his mate or his neighbour as his 'political' equal. And that has not very much to do with the fact of their equal possession of the parliamentary franchise. That is a fact; merely to recognize it as a fact has no dynamic meaning at all. What we have to do is to realize it as a truth, to understand in our imagination (which is the harmony of heart and mind) the truth of which the fact is only the outward sign. My mate and my neighbour have an equal share with me in responsible sovereignty over our common social destiny; and it is my duty to try to make that equal sovereignty a reality of experience.

Still, it seems abstract. We have to overcome that abstraction, and to make this relation of abstract political equality a relation of real political equality. And that can only be done by a new relation of community; indeed, whenever it is attempted there comes into being the nucleus of new community. In a spirit of complete simplicity we have to set ourselves to re-create the elements of personal community, as men who have by hard and bitter experience learned that democracy must strive to become true fellowship. For democracy to be real and vital its members must really know and love one another. They must have tried one another, discovered whom to trust; more than this, they must be knit to one another by the

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sense of the community as a reality surpassing their individual selves. Applied to modern mass-society as it is, this doctrine of the surpassing reality of the community is demonic; it leads straightway to the Moloch-worship of the totalitarian state. So it is with all truths of life; they are tragic and ambiguous. The surpassing reality of the community is a truth which has to be re-created to-day. Predicated of existing society it is deathly in its consequences; it is true only of a community which is struggling to liberate itself from the impersonal abstraction in which its social relations are so entirely involved.

The surpassing reality of the community must become a truth of direct and immediate experience. And by direct and immediate experience of community we do not mean the temporary and misleading exaltation of emotional or quasi-religious group-experience. That such experiences are increasingly sought in society to-day is indeed a symptom of that 'frustration of the societal instincts' from which we suffer so acutely, and for the most part so unconsciously, to-day. This frustration, unless we become conscious of it, and seek betimes to satisfy it by healthy means, contains the potentiality of disaster. For, so long as it endures, a modern mass-society is liable to be swept to catastrophe at any moment by a wave of mass-hysteria. Indeed, government by organized mass-hysteria seems to be the typical development of modern mass-society. It is just as prevalent (so far as I can judge) in Russia as in Germany or Italy. The organized mass-hatred of 'Trotskyism' in the Soviet Union appears to me quite

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indistinguishable from the organized mass-hatred of democracy or Marxism or Jewry in Germany and Italy.

This diabolical perversion of the instinct for community in modern mass-society is not effectively resisted by being deprecated and deplored by the liberal individualist of contemporary 'democracy': for whom, in reality, 'democracy' means little more than the system under which his anti-social individualism is licensed and sanctified. It can only be countered positively, that is, by the conscious effort of those who have come to realize that the modern hunger for spurious community is primarily the consequence of the frustration of the instinct for true community which the impersonal relations of capitalist society have imposed upon men. We have ourselves to create a new sense and experience of community.

We have, moreover, to be capable of conceiving this creation of a new sense of community in many forms. The simplest and most literal is the actual formation of new communities, which seek to be self-supporting in the primary necessities of life. The experiment has been tried many times, and the history of the manifold attempts at such self-supporting communities is not encouraging. Nevertheless, the effort is necessary; but it is to be conceived rather as a concrete criticism of modern society, and as an attempt to establish places of restoration and refuge from its anti-human stresses, than as an alternative form of society which could eventually replace the present form. Such communities may be regarded as embodying the primary type

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of personal community-relation that is required by true democracy, a kind of maximum or optimum in somewhat the same sense as complete disarmament is the maximum or optimum of moral initiative for democracy at the level of national politics. The failures of most such efforts in the recent past have been due to the fact that such communities have been founded without a solid basis in Christian discipline, and without a constant experience of the spiritual unity which comes through Christian worship.¹

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If we regard such a community as an attempt at a revival of Christian monasticism in a secularized form, we may use it as a means of approaching the larger problem of regenerating our society. Obviously, such a community, even where its basis and principles are avowedly Christian, is essentially different from a monastic community: first, in that its distinctive purpose is not the following of the contemplative life, and, second, in that it is not a celibate community, but a community of families. In other words, it is a post-Reformation religious community.

The Reformation was an ambiguous happening. One of the elements contained in it was a Christian vindication of family life. The Reformation asserted (among other things) that the married priest could be of equal sanctity with the celibate. This was by no means so easy, or so certain, as it appeared to the more

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confident of the Reformers; and it is probably true that, in historical fact, the innovation of a married priesthood generally lowered the level of the ideal of Christian sanctity. The negation of the idea that the vocation of Christian priesthood demanded a real sacrifice had for its effect a considerable secularization of Christian morality, and the vital disappearance of the notion that an element of heroism is involved in a Christian vocation. The very highest achievement of a married priesthood was a perfection of a kind of *lay* Christianity, and reformed Christianity has suffered, more than it admits, by the consequent diminution of heroism and sainthood in the texture of the life of the visible Church. To take a single example in the personal order, it was mainly due to this substitution of respectability for heroism that the Church of England lost Newman, whom it could ill afford to lose; and in the impersonal order, it has powerfully contributed to that widespread unawareness in the English clergy of the extent to which the visible Church in England is an integral part of the existing secular social system, so that it is less easily capable of a real gesture of heroism than the Roman Catholic Church, which is, by reason of the celibacy of its priesthood, more truly a pilgrim in this world.²

Not only does the substitution of a married for a celibate priesthood lead to a decline of moral heroism in personal life, and consequently to an unpreparedness for ‘political’ heroism in the social order; but it leads, very naturally, to a tacit refusal to admit this decline and this unpreparedness. A point is reached

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at which it is taken for granted that Holy Orders is a profession in the same sense as the Law or the Services, without its being realized that the very notion of 'profession' has been emasculated in the process. Just as 'enthusiasm' was deprecated by the clergy in the eighteenth century, so a radical self-criticism is deprecated in the twentieth: and the psychological consequences are often manifest in a spurious sanctity and heroism. Priests of the Church of England still show their gallantry, too often, in ritualistic extravagance. Such consequences of the abandonment of celibacy as these — to treat the subject fully would demand a book — are to be regarded as proceeding from a failure to recognize the positive significance of the revolution in Christian thinking which was involved in making a married priesthood the norm. Consciously or unconsciously, it involved the assertion that the marriage-relation between a man and a woman is capable of the highest degree of sanctification possible in earthly life. Whether this is in fact true or not, it is obvious that, unless it is grounded on this belief, the institution of a married priesthood simultaneously with the abolition of monasticism must have produced a degeneration of Christian morality.

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I believe that it is true that the marriage relation is one in which a man and woman are capable of the highest degree of sanctity possible in human life; but

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it seems self-evident that, if this is true, it is a truth that must cost a great deal to establish. To make the marriage-relation truly compatible with Christian heroism demands a new relation of husband and wife not merely between themselves but to their children. It is surely something of a caricature of the function of a Christian priesthood if the married priest is to be continually inhibited from courageous action by the thought of the 'duty to his family' — when, as almost invariably happens, that duty is conceived not according to any scheme of Christian values, but according to the scheme of values prevalent in a completely secular society. In other words, unless the duty of a Christian priest to his family is conceived within a scheme of real simplicity and frugality, the capacity for heroism of a Church with a married priesthood is deplorably diminished. Where the celibate priest may live in splendour and not be corrupted by it, because by reason of his celibacy it palpably attaches to his hierarchical *office* alone, the married priest may not: for his splendour or his relative luxury are enjoyed also by his family, who have no hierarchical title to them.

It is worth remembering that shortly before the English Civil War an effort was made by a man of genius to solve this problem of the reconciliation of the sanctified Christian life with family life. The Little Gidding community, founded and guided by Nicholas Ferrar, may be regarded as the attempt of a prophetic spirit to establish a form of life for the Christian priesthood before the catholic tradition was

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wholly lost. The attempt was brought to nothing by the Civil War: but its significance is thereby rather heightened than diminished. Although the kind of discipline which Nicholas Ferrar sought to establish erred by excess of rigour, in his idea was contained the promise of a future development which is now urgently required. It seems clear that the one condition on which the marriage of the Christian priesthood may enure, as it should, not to the disappearance of Christian heroism but to its establishment in the texture of ordinary life, is that the family of the married Christian priest should consciously regard itself as the cell of a new Christian community. That is how, in fact, not a few married Christian priests do regard their family lives, because their hearts are in the right place. But the aim should now be consciously pursued, with a much fuller knowledge of all that it involves: and above all with a clear understanding that is contrary to a Christian vocation to have it cribbed, cabined and confined by the anxiety to establish one's children in positions of privilege in a secular and profoundly un-Christian society.

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The married Christian priest has, I believe, a part of immense importance to play in the creation of the lay Christian community in a form appropriate to modern conditions, if he would only come to realize the nature of his opportunity, and how much there is,

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in the rural parishes anyhow, upon which he could build if he had the imagination and the will and the patience to do it.

The parish church in the remote rural district is still the focus of the life of the village-community. In the church-service the inhabitants of the village become conscious of their community; their common worship is their corporate act. And in the cases where the country parson is still mindful of his real relation to the village-community as a whole, he is not merely the priest of the church, but the father of his parishioners — their guide, philosopher and friend.³

Only those who have lived in the remote countryside know how deep is the need among the villagers of someone to whom they can go for counsel and help, without the inhibitions of fear or the resentment of subservience. The need is not often met by the country parson to-day.

What needs to be aroused is an imaginative awareness of the unique field of opportunity which the vocation of a country parson offers to the devoted man and wife to-day. The countryside is being steadily drained of its best youth. The education in rural districts is urbanized, and all the influences which are brought to bear upon the country child are now urban in their tendency. It is nothing less than disastrous when, as so frequently happens now, the mentality of the parson and his wife is likewise predominantly urban. The country parson of to-day is too often the transplanted townsman. He who should be the custodian of a different tradition and the interpreter of other

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values than the urban, and the instructed guardian of a system of social relations which are concrete and personal instead of abstract and impersonal, has seldom any conception of the creative work he might do in fostering an independent and specifically rural view of life. Urban-minded, in the country he lives in exile.

Nevertheless, my conviction is that the country parson is called to be an instrument of the regeneration of the rural community at this crucial time: when its traditions are fast decaying, and when the relative autonomy of the rural community is more desperately needed than ever to redress the balance of an urbanized and centralized society. But this new situation finds the country parson in general quite unprepared to meet it. At the moment when he needs a conscious understanding of the part he is called to play, he wanders between two worlds. In the old days, the parson could regard himself as a part of a stable order in the countryside: he belonged to the gentry. To-day, his position is too often equivocal. He has inherited the remnants of an old status; but even where he possesses the intellectual and personal dignity to correspond with the status, the fact remains that the old order is disintegrating. The educational functions which used to be fulfilled by the liberal-minded parson are now fulfilled by other agencies; and it is becoming relatively rare that the country parson is regarded by the educated people of a country parish as a free and equal associate. He is, very often, the victim of a sense of inferiority, for which he compensates by keeping his

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distance from the villager. The condition of things is lamentable in itself; and it involves the neglect of a function which only the country parson can adequately fulfil.

The spiritual mission of the Church as we conceive it, is to maintain the sense of a *personal* relation between man and man, between man and his work, between man and the place he lives in. These simple relations are, as it were, the substrate, the natural substance, of the personal relation between man and God. This vital relation is being continually eaten away by the advances of an abstract and impersonal civilization — by what Wordsworth called, a hundred years ago, a continuous process of 'depersonalizing social relations'. The country parson should understand that it is his function and his privilege to set in motion and to foster a counter-process of increasing personalization.

The old organic and unconscious social relation has now reached the end of a long period of disintegration: the new positive period of organized social relations is at hand. If the parsons played their part in this new period, they could do more than any other single class of men to secure that the period of organized social relations shall not be a period of mechanical and soulless regimentation but one of conscious and Christian mutuality.

Christian influence and Christian inspiration is indispensable to the filling of the abstract pattern of democracy with a concrete content: for, as we have tried to show, the principle which is realized in democracy is a Christian principle. The task is to

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prevent it from degenerating into a mechanism. This can be done only by recalling men to the faith that is at the source of vital democracy. That cannot be done by precept, but only by example, in the secularized society of to-day. Christianity has to make good its claim, all over again, to be the sovereign influence in society. And that can be achieved only if the profession of Christianity has visible consequences in a re-personalization of the social relations of our modern abstract collective.

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In a democracy the Christian Church has the opportunity of fulfilling its function — which is the education of men into the reality, the nature and the responsibilities of human brotherhood — more completely than in any other organization of the secular society. If democracy is, as we contend, an essentially Christian organization of society, then it is but natural that the Christian Church should be more intimately and beneficently related to the life of the people in this than in any other extant form of social organization. This is hardly the fact, though we may acknowledge that the relation of the national Church to the life of the people in England is in some ways more intimate than it was a hundred years ago.¹ But that is not saying much. The national Church to-day is far from fulfilling its most important function in a mass-democracy: which is to be the chief means of educating the members of a mass-democracy to a knowledge of their responsibility as members of a Christian secular society. Fortunately, the Church in England consists of more than the Church of England; and, as we saw in an earlier chapter, some of the Nonconformist churches were among the chief proponents of complete democracy in England.

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But we are no longer concerned with the attitude of the Christian Church during the advance towards mass-democracy. That is past history; and mass-democracy is a present fact. It is a much newer fact than is generally realized, and to its newness we may attribute much of the apparent failure of the Christian Church to rise to its responsibilities in the new organization of society. The chief of these is as simple as it is exacting. The Christian Church — and in England, by reason of its parochial organization and the nature of its endowment, the national Church above all — should be the chief instrument in the education of democracy. First, because the other organs of education lose contact with the future citizen, in most cases, long before he becomes a citizen of democracy; whereas the Church is, or seeks to be, in contact with him until his life's end. And, secondly, because the Church has in its keeping the true 'mystery' of democracy, which is religious and Christian.

The education of democracy into an understanding of its own 'mystery' is by far the most important kind of education in a democratic society; and it is by far the most neglected. For the education that is vital to democracy is not primarily any kind of formal education, still less is it a matter of book-knowledge; it is education into an awareness of moral and civic responsibility in the widest and deepest sense. It is much more an education of the heart and the imagination than an education of the intellect; or, if such a statement tends to be dangerously one-sided, we may confine ourselves to saying that intellectual education is

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no more than half of it. It is, above all, education into a spirit — into an ethos.

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Here is the crucial problem of our modern democracy, and its solution is urgent indeed. And the first step towards a solution is to have a clear understanding of the nature of the problem.

It is a paradoxical problem, in the nature of the case: because it is a problem of creation — of bringing into being out of elements which are in existence, something which does not yet exist. And this something comprehends ourselves, for it is society. Thus, it is foolish to expect and dangerous to demand that the existing democratic state shall undertake this duty of educating its citizens into the spirit of democracy, because a state capable of conceiving such education as its most important function is precisely that which has to be created. On the other hand, we need this kind of education in order to form the citizens who will be capable of creating such a state.

We can see the nature of the problem in more concrete terms, and with a more acute sense of its actuality, if we consider the character of the education which is established in the existing Fascist or Communist societies. There we see clearly that the heads of the totalitarian states make education — in the sense of the psychological formation of their citizens — their first and most primary concern. The ordinary 'democratic'

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reaction to this intensive conditioning of the totalitarian citizens is that it is just totalitarian, and to be avoided like the plague — as indeed it is. But this is a purely negative reaction, like so many democratic reactions to totalitarian behaviour. It is insufficient. Totalitarian education confronts us with a problem to which we must find a positive solution. We have to discover by what kind of education the citizens of a democracy can be integrated at their own level of existence.

The problem of integration by 'education' is simply solved by the totalitarian leaders. The state educates its citizens into the belief that the existing state is the supreme arbiter of values, and itself the final reality and the absolute good. The individual exists, in so far as he does exist, in and for the state, which he is taught to believe is infallible. But the appropriate education for citizens of a democratic society is of a different order altogether: it must be an education into the conviction that the purpose of the state is to serve the highest development of the responsible person. Since it is a democratic society, such education must be available to its every member: therefore it seems the state must provide it. Thus, ideally, the democratic state should provide an education of its citizens into the knowledge of its own essentially instrumental character. But that is a negative conception, such that, unless it is given substance by its complementary positive, it must tend to individualistic atomism: which is, in fact, the evil ethos of existing democracy. The dominance of this atomistic conception of democracy

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allows the economic and social organism to develop, in the main, autonomously and without rational control, and thus leads to a situation in which totalitarianism is finally invoked as a desperate remedy.

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The complementary positive of the conception that the democratic state is essentially instrumental to the full development of the responsible person, is a positive democratic conception of the responsible person. Such a conception of the responsible person is neither individualistic, nor collective. It is not individualistic, because it recognizes that society is not only necessary to the development of the person, but is itself a moral person representative of the moral persons of its members. Loyalty to the democratic state is therefore an essential attribute of the developed person; but the degree of his loyalty depends upon the degree of moralization of the state. On the other hand, the collective conception of the person, which is fundamental to the totalitarian state, demands an unconditional loyalty to the state, because on this unconditional loyalty the reality of the person depends, in a quasi-religious sense. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*; totalitarianism is secular theocracy.

The democratic conception of the person, being neither individualistic nor collective, rejects unconditional loyalty to the state, yet professes loyalty to the state. This loyalty becomes less reserved, as the state

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becomes more moral; but it is never unconditional. As the state becomes of a nature to promote more and more the development of the free and responsible person — which includes the development of the sense of increasing loyalty to the state, as the state becomes more moralized — so the increasing loyalty towards it partakes more and more of a genuine Christian freedom. And this is the distinctive element in the conception of the person which must be normative for education in democracy. One may perhaps fairly describe it by saying that it is necessary to the development of the democratic person that the democratic state should be conceived by him not merely as instrumental, but also as sacramental; whereas the totalitarian person, in so far as he is conscious, conceives the totalitarian state neither as instrumental, nor as sacramental, but as itself divine.

This conception of the democratic state as sacramental involves the notion of creative reciprocity (analogous to the Christian conception of sacramental grace) between the individual and the state. Ideally, the democratic state and its institutions are, and are understood by its members to be, a necessary means to the development of the free and responsible person, while the development of the free and responsible persons is necessary to the fulfilment of its purpose by the democratic state. Again, ideally, a progressive understanding of this creative reciprocity is necessary to the development of the free and responsible member. That is manifestly Utopian if applied to the actual membership of an actual democracy. But such an

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ideal is no more irrelevant to the practice of an actual democracy than the unattainable ideal of the Christian life is to concrete living. The Christian knows he must fail to attain the ideal, yet he tries to attain it; and indeed, the more advised his conviction that it is unattainable, the more serious and sustained will be his effort to attain it. Just as within the visible Christian Church there are innumerable degrees of sincerity of profession, culminating in a nucleus whose effort to follow the Master is unremitting, so within an actual democracy there must be a central democratic nucleus which 'knows what it fights for and loves what it knows'. This 'democracy within democracy' is the leaven in the lump. To it falls the duty of being the main instrument of democratic education.

Of the organs, actually existing, which could be used for democratic education in this sense, and thus potentially compose 'the democracy within democracy', a national Church is indubitably the chief. To perform this task of education, in the condition of existing mass-democracy, is the one adequate return for the endowment of the Church by the national society. All churchmen might agree, in the abstract, that the function of the Church was national in the sense that the Church was the spiritual consciousness of the nation; and over a century ago Coleridge, and his disciple Dr. Arnold, pointed out the abiding significance of the fact that the King of England was the head of the English Church. But the abiding significance of these truths has to be translated into the different conditions of to-day. Just as Coleridge

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and Arnold demanded that the national Church should educate Englishmen into a Christian understanding of the nature of society in their day, so we must demand that the national Church should educate them into a Christian understanding of the nature of the complete democracy of to-day.

The national Church may thus be regarded as the most comprehensive organizational form of 'the democracy within democracy'. Of course, it is that only in potentiality and idea. The idea is very imperfectly realized. But that is not surprising if we remember that mass-democracy is a recent growth. We will prophesy that, as the struggle of modern democracy to exist becomes more arduous, the function of the Christian Church as the archetypc of the necessary 'democracy within democracy' will become much more evident than it is to-day.

§

Actual democracy, with its freedom of speech and freedom of the Press, supplies the conditions under which 'the democracy within democracy' can freely pursue its educational mission by precept and example. But the extent and nature of this freedom should not be exaggerated; it consists, almost entirely, in freedom from positive interference by the democratic state. To imagine that the freedom secured by actual democracy goes much beyond this is to expose oneself to illusion and to the cynicism that follows disillusion.

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Of this negative freedom to inculcate opinion without interference by the state the freedom of the Press is a particular form. The freedom of the Press is a negative freedom, but it is not a nugatory one. Of it Mr. T. S. Eliot wrote recently:

We assume that we have 'freedom' of the Press so long as we have violent differences of opinion finding their way into print; so long as a silly official policy on any matter can be attacked by an opposition still sillier. This is the freedom of two mobs. It is a higher degree of freedom when thoughtful and independent individuals have the opportunity of addressing each other. If they have no vehicles by which they can express their opinion, then for them the freedom of the Press does not exist.

This is a little too severe; and 'by a higher degree of freedom' is really meant 'a different and more valuable *kind* of freedom'. The 'freedom of the Press' is not freedom for everybody to express his opinion in the Press. But the phrase is used with vague overtones which suggest more than the reality. All that the freedom of the Press (which is the printing-press) really implies is that books and newspapers and journals are free from interference or control by the government except for offences against the Common Law. That is an important freedom, which must not be underestimated simply because it includes no guarantee that thoughtful and independent individuals shall, in fact, be able to express themselves freely in books and newspapers and journals. The existence of that different freedom — in the reasonable form

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defined by Mr. Eliot — depends directly on the willingness of a sufficient number of people to buy books and support journals for the expression of the views of thoughtful and independent individuals. That readiness in the case of journals depends in its turn upon a general understanding that the existence of such a journal depends upon its being independent of revenue from advertisement. So soon as a journal is dependent upon advertising revenue for solvency, circulation must be its primary concern, not independence or thoughtfulness.

In order to understand why some attractive, but now delusory, overtones have attached themselves to the phrase 'the freedom of the Press' we need to consider it historically. This accumulation of overtones probably begins with Milton's great plea for 'the liberty of unlicensed printing'; then comes Wilkes and *The North Briton*, and the struggle for the liberty of the subject over the legality of the general warrant; then the defeat of the prolonged effort of the House of Commons to prevent accurate reporting of its debates by condemning their publication as breach of privilege; and finally the successful attempt to bring into existence a newspaper press which did not need to rely on secret subventions from the government. These are, at any rate, some of the chief phases of the long struggle to establish the freedom of the Press from government interference or control. The final phase was reached early in the nineteenth century. 'The freedom of the Press' was then established by enterprising proprietor-editors of newspapers (such as

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Coleridge's friend, Daniel Stuart of the *Morning Post* and the *Courier*) who saw that a daily newspaper could become self-supporting by means of the advertisements it carried, instead of depending upon a government subvention. Thus, the establishment of a 'free Press' was, in fact, the successful establishment of newspapers dependent upon advertisement revenue.

By the characteristic paradox of capitalist enterprise, the same mechanism which originally served to assert a new and real liberty, became in course of time the instrument of a new bondage. Whereas in the early nineteenth century the independence and seriousness of a newspaper attracted the advertisers, who were individual men with 'liberal' inclinations and tastes of their own (including a taste for thoughtfulness and independence), now in the twentieth century the necessity of attracting advertising revenue has become primary. Owing to the change in our economic system, expenditure on advertising is no longer in the control of individuals but of corporations, and the primary necessity of attracting it precludes striving for journalistic independence. Nothing can be allowed to stand in the way of vast circulation; and since the only source of vast circulation is the huge semi-literate public created by the Education Act of 1870, independence and thoughtfulness are increasingly at a discount.

Thus the actual condition comprehended in the phrase 'the freedom of the Press' in mid-Victorian times is entirely different from the condition comprehended in the phrase to-day. Indeed during the

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twenty-seven years of my own career as a journalist, the change has been prodigious. The number of independent journals of opinion has decreased, I should estimate, by two-thirds. For example, the number of daily newspapers now being published in London is not more than one-third of the number published in 1912. No less than three independent weekly journals — the *Nation*, the *Athenaeum*, the *Week-End Review* — have been merged into the *New Statesman* of to-day. They have been swamped by the expansion of the Sunday newspapers. It is futile to shed tears over this inevitable development, which is implicit in the capitalist system, but it is important to realize that the condition vaguely described as 'the freedom of the Press' has undergone this revolutionary change. The former freedom, which actually existed, to propagate many types of opinion by means of a great variety of journals of opinion has been drastically diminished. The negative freedom of the Press, from government interference, still remains intact; the positive freedom to avail oneself effectively of this negative freedom has largely disappeared.

What is required in order to regain this positive freedom? The answer to that question is typical for the solution of the problem of education in democracy. The situation of the Press to-day is a direct consequence of the stage in capitalist development which society has reached — that concentration of capitals which Marx foresaw. Dictatorial socialism, national socialism, state-socialism (at least in the form generally conceived) — none of these systems will do other

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than aggravate the tendency. The first two will entirely abolish even the negative freedom of the Press — as we see in Russia and in Germany.

State-socialism is rather different. So much depends upon what is understood by it. It is possible to conceive a state-socialism which would regard it as one of its most important duties to promote and protect autonomous economic and cultural enclaves wherever possible. But in the totalitarian form in which it is generally envisaged, it would have no other or better effect than to turn the Press into a kind of huge BBC — a public utility corporation, perhaps ‘liberally’ conducted, but in fact offering less freedom to genuinely independent opinion than does the BBC to-day.

The only immediately practical way to regain a positive freedom of the Press is by an effort of ‘the democracy within democracy’. Chosen journals must be supported by voluntary groups composed of people who understand the nature of capitalist society and its crushing effect on freedom of expression, and who therefore comprehend the necessity of paying a relatively high, non-competitive price for a journal, if it is to be able to exist independently of advertisements. In other words, they have to understand — implicitly or explicitly — that the condition of a positive freedom of the Press is that the journal they support should not be a capitalist commodity at all. To the extent of their activity as voluntary supporters of such an independent journal they ‘come out of’ capitalist society and enter a new association, which they have freely and responsibly willed. Moreover, in this new

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association they have either directly, or vicariously, to take upon themselves the functions of the capitalist economy in respect of the journal of their choice: they have to make propaganda for it, not with a view to increasing its circulation as an end in itself, or in order to attract advertisements, but in order to increase the number of those who enter into this voluntary association.

§

Such a voluntary association of supporters to a journal, whereby 'the freedom of the Press' is made positive, is a typical example of non-local 'democracy within democracy', whereas the revivified parish, centred in a revivified Church, of which we spoke in the last chapter, is a typical example of local 'democracy within democracy'. These two types of creative community are to be regarded as complementary. The non-local is peculiarly typical of the integrated technological society of to-day; the local has its roots far in the past. But the object of both is to build a resistance to the creation and exploitation of mass-psychology by modern technique. Both, in different ways and to different degrees, offer a corrective to the depersonalization of social relations under capitalist democracy.

This depersonalization is not to be regarded as a mere and unmitigated evil. The majority of necessary processes in a technological society require it. But a

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distinction is urgently required between the necessary and the unnecessary depersonalization of social relations. The unnecessary depersonalization is an unmitigated evil against which a systematic and sustained fight must be waged. This fight is the distinctive work of 'the democracy within democracy' whose guiding principle must be the repersonalization of social relations wherever possible. Once the essential problem of democracy is formulated in those terms, it becomes evident how deeply it concerns the Christian Church, and how pre-eminently that Church is called to be the inspiration and defence of 'the democracy within democracy'.

It is not, however, to be supposed that the formation of these creative communities, these voluntary associations, local and non-local, implies a more reactionary opposition to the necessary technological integration of a modern society. Our previous distinction between necessary and unnecessary depersonalization should have made this clear; but it is desirable to insist that the resistance to unnecessary depersonalization can be rational and effective only when a degree of necessary depersonalization is admitted. On that admission, indeed, depends the possibility of realizing the urgency of the complementary movement of repersonalization. To understand, and propagate the understanding, that an antithetical movement is at work, but now blindly and unconsciously, and that its working must now become as far as possible conscious and rational — this is eminently the function of 'the democracy within democracy'. The blind and unconscious antithesis to

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excessive depersonalization is the surrender to moods of mass-hysteria and herd emotion. The positive and creative counter-movement is the formation of innumerable enclaves of repersonalized social relations — a body of incessant existential criticism and purification of the social body. ‘Without contraries there is no progression’, said William Blake; ‘the democracy within democracy’ applies this sovereign principle of the imagination first to the understanding and then to the actual vivification of our modern society.

On the political plane this effort would fill with a positive content the huge silent spaces between the elected democratic representative in parliament and the individual man. Those spaces — years in the time-dimension, and heaven knows what in the dimension of social contact — are not to be filled by the time-honoured ‘Write to your M.P.’ The Member of Parliament, in any creative conception of a democratic society, is not a delegate, but a representative, sent to parliament to act with responsible freedom. He has the right to be left alone. Those spaces are properly to be filled by positive democratic activities, the propagation and the exercise of responsible freedom of individuals in their less august and imperial but more concrete and immediate associations. These require to be vitalized if the skeleton of representative democracy is to be clothed in warm flesh and blood. Every such association, acknowledging a bond between its members of a different and higher order than mere self-interest, is a component of the nucleus of ‘democracy within democracy’. Moreover, the process

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of forming this nucleus is, in fact, the specifically democratic education of a democratic society.

That process of education, we urge, is made really and concretely possible only by the formation of voluntary associations which establish between their members a new social relation, based on a new community of responsibility. In order that the negative freedom of formal democracy may gradually be filled by the positive freedom of real democracy, the creation and activity of the democracy within a democracy is required, corresponding to the *tertium quid* which we discerned as existing between collectivism and individualism. We have to be clear that mere political democracy is not an alternative to these. That is plain, if only because democracy and individualism have co-existed in England and America so long that they are usually mistaken for one another. On the other hand, at the present time there is an increasing growth of collectivism without any obvious change in our democracy. Up to a point both individualism and collectivism may be regarded as tendencies in a social economy which are necessary and good, so long as they are kept in control by a higher principle. The 'democracy within a democracy' is that which keeps the elements of individualism and collectivism in control. It realizes that both are necessary; but it realizes also that unless they are balanced in the body politic by a third influence — namely, the consciousness that synthesis between them is necessary — the final cause of democracy, which is the free and responsible person, will be destroyed by the anarchy of individualism or

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the pantarchy of collectivism. The organization of this consciousness is the *sine qua non* of the continued vitality of democracy, above all at a time when the unprecedented tempo of social change is outside the range of our accustomed awareness. Unless this consciousness, which now exists in a diffused and instinctive form, is organized and concentrated, there will be nothing to oppose the dangers of uncriticized collectivism but an uncritical and unrealistic individualism; and, since 'any order is better than none', the uncontrolled collectivism will triumph over individualistic anarchy. The function of the organized democratic consciousness is to secure that not *any* order is welcomed, but only the best and most human order.

The organization of this consciousness may be conceived as a comprehensive voluntary association, comprehending many component associations. This is the true democratic counterpart of the party-organizations under Fascism and Communism. Since it is based on the democratic conception of the free and responsible person, and since that conception is really based on Christian principles, it will probably be largely Christian in composition; but Christian profession will obviously not be a condition of participation. It is much rather a common loyalty to certain fundamental Christian values than a common acceptance of the Christian cult that is required; for mere acceptance of the Christian cult, unfortunately, affords no guarantee whatever that Christian values are regarded as supreme for society.

The practical functions of these component associa-

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tions are infinitely various, to accord with the complexity of our modern and transitional society; but they seek to realize one common aim: that the sanctity of the free and responsible person shall be acknowledged in the concrete activity of society — on the one hand, in the new social institutions and forms of economic organization which are continually being developed, largely without real forethought, by a process of administrative improvisation by the state and, on the other hand, in the complementary voluntary institutions which are continually being created in order to remedy social injustice and correct social inertia. The organization of the democratic consciousness in such a comprehensive voluntary association must not be taken to imply what is currently known as an 'organization'. It is not suggested that there should be a federation or amalgamation of such associations. What is required is the gradual concentration and crystallization of a critical and co-ordinating consciousness which, pursuing its own work of education, would be content to approve and support associations which were in fact, through instinctive rightness rather than deliberate allegiance to principle, doing the good work in their several ways.

Above all, what is required is the development of a sense of democratic direction in a class of responsible men, who are prepared to think, not for themselves, but for society as a whole, and not to yield themselves — at least without an incessant struggle — to the drag of social inertia. That calls for a development of the imagination which is likely to be burdensome to those

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who undergo it. The path of greater awareness is strait and full of thorns to-day. The temptation to relapse into inertia becomes steadily stronger as the difficulties of disengaging ourselves from the compulsions of an unconscious social order increase. But precisely because the temptation is so great and so ubiquitous, the need of contending with it is more urgent. Our every act must be the act of a responsible man. These are days, as the late Pope said, 'when nobody is allowed to be mediocre'.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

(L.M.=Landshut and Mayer's edition of Marx's early writings entitled *Historische Materialismus*, 2 vols. Kroner-Verlag: Leipzig.)

CHAPTER II

NOTE 1, p. 34. *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie: Einleitung* (L.M., I, p. 263).

NOTE 2, p. 36. *Ibid.* (L.M., I, p. 263).

NOTE 3, p. 36. It is only fair to say that Marx's word is *Mysticismus*, which often has a derogatory nuance as compared with the word *Mystik*. *Mysticismus* may, therefore, mean rather 'mystification' than 'mysticism' in the 8th Thesis. That does not affect the statement that 'Marxism is a kind of materialistic mysticism'.

NOTE 4, p. 38. *Zur Kritik der H.R.* (L.M., I, p. 264).

NOTE 5, p. 38. In common fairness to Marx, it must be said that he was wholly concerned with religion as a social phenomenon — with religion as 'compensation' for social imperfections. I see no reason to suppose that he would not have allowed religion an important place as 'compensation' for the ills that flesh — not the social system — is heir to. The fact is that Marx had never thought out his position in regard to *religion* at all, in spite of his belief that he had disposed of it critically. What he had disposed of was Hegel's idealist philosophy which was the contemporary German substitute for religion. From this angle Marxism may be regarded as a Jewish religious reaction against the sham-religion of Hegelian idealism, with its virtual identification of the existing Prussian state and the Kingdom of God. Marx, we may say, identified the Kingdom of God with the communistic society to be — after great tribulation. That is a serious heresy from the Christian point of view; but it is far more Christian than the Hegelian position, and is not very remote from the chiliasm of primitive Christianity.

NOTE 6, p. 40. Even now, in 1938, the *terror* of the workhouse potently persists, at any rate in the countryside. This terror of the workhouse is quite distinct from a shrinking from the

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uniformity of an institution, as such: which is often exaggerated. Nowadays, the country labourer and his wife look upon the County Hospital with genuine affection. W. H. Hudson's description of the attitude of the Wiltshireman to the Salisbury Infirmary corresponds to my experience of the Norfolk man's attitude towards the Norwich Hospital. Whether his account of the attitude of the London poor towards their hospitals is true, I cannot say. Perhaps the Londoner is not terrified of the workhouse either.

That great, comely building of warm, red brick, in Fisherton Street, set well back so that you can see it as a whole, behind its cedar and beech-trees — how familiar it is to the villagers! In numberless humble-homes, in hundreds of villages of the Plain, and all over the surrounding country, the 'Infirmary' is a name of the deepest meaning, and a place of many sad and tender and beautiful associations. I heard it spoken of in a manner which surprised me at first, for I know some of the London poor and am accustomed to their attitude towards the metropolitan hospitals. The Londoner uses them very freely; they have come to be as necessary to him as the grocer's shop and the public-house, but for all the benefits he receives from them he has no faintest sense of gratitude, and it is my experience that if you speak to him of this he is roused to anger and demands 'What are they for?' So far is he from having any thankful thoughts for all that has been given him for nothing and done for him and for his, if he has anything to say at all on the matter it is to find fault with the hospitals and cast blame on them for not healing him more quickly or thoroughly.

This country-town hospital and infirmary is differently regarded by the villagers of the Plain. It is acquainted with it; perhaps it is not easy for anyone, even in this most healthy district, to get through life without sickness, and all are liable to accidents. The injured or afflicted youth, taken straight from his rough, hard life and poor cottage, wonders at the place he finds himself in — the wide, clean airy room and white, easy bed, the care and skill of the doctors, the tender nursing by women, and comforts and luxuries, all without payment, but given as it seems to him out of pure divine love and compassion — all this comes to him as something strange, almost incredible. He suffers much perhaps,

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but can bear pain stoically and forget it when it is past, but the loving kindness he has experienced is remembered. *A Shepherd's Life* (7th ed.), pp. 18-19.

NOTE 7, p. 41. But it is true that, even to-day, nearly 20 per cent of British working-class children are under-nourished through no fault of their parents. To be under-nourished means to be gently starved — to be starved without the sensation of starvation.

CHAPTER III

NOTE 1, p. 42. See my *Heaven— and Earth*, Chapters I-III.

NOTE 2, p. 43. *Six Centuries of Work and Wages* (6th ed.), p. 389.

NOTE 3, p. 46.

Workmen were to obey their master as they would obey the State, and the State was to enforce the master's commands as it would its own. This was the new policy behind the Combination Laws of 1799 and 1800. These two Acts, the second modifying the first, prohibiting all common action in defence of their common interests by workmen, remain the most unqualified surrender of the State to the discretion of a class in the history of England. . . .

How much the working classes lost in happiness, in physical energy, in moral power, in the inherited stamina of mind and body, during the years when these overwhelming forces were pressing them down, it is impossible to estimate. They were years of great moment to the race, and English history would have been very different for many generations . . . if the workers had been allowed to use the resources of organization for the defence of a standard of life, and if the rulers of England had not tied their hands behind their backs at the time, more than any other, at which they needed all their strength. Barbara and J. L. Hammond: *The Town Labourer* (1760-1832), pp. 113, 141.

NOTE 4, p. 50. Hurrell Froude: *Remains*, I.

CHAPTER IV

NOTE 1, p. 58. I am not, of course, denying that property still has, in fact, very great political power (*See Chap. XIII*); but it has

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this indirectly, and, as I show later, largely owing to the indifference, and sometimes with the positive approval of the working class. For the whole question of 'the ruling class', see my *The Price of Leadership* (S.C.M. Press).

CHAPTER V

NOTE 1, p. 72. The proof of this statement, if any is needed, is that the Tsarist autocracy in December 1893, made practically impossible the change from communal to household tenure. The commune was regarded as the stronghold of the Tsarist regime. The attitude was changed in 1902 simply because the peasants were in danger of permanent starvation.

The completed manifestation of the English yeoman was his achievement in the Parliamentary army in the Civil War. Thus the pioneer of revolution in one country becomes, by lapse of time and the movement of history, the arch-enemy of revolution in another.

CHAPTER VI

NOTE 1, p. 77. For an illuminating account of this relation see the autobiographical chapter at the beginning of Paul Tillich's *The Interpretation of History*: also the narrative of the failure of his attempt to establish a living relation between Socialism and German Protestantism after the war.

NOTE 2, p. 78. *Deutsche Ideologie* (L.M., II, p. 13).

NOTE 3, p. 78. The *locus classicus* for this religious derivation of the democratic impulse in England is the *Debates of the Parliamentary Army in 1647-9*, originally published from the Clarke MSS. by Sir Charles Firth, and now republished by Professor A. S. P. Woodhouse under the title *Puritanism and Liberty* (Cape). In those debates we see the actual birth-process of the democratic impulse. See, in particular, the speeches of Colonel Rainborough. They are well discussed in A. D. Lindsay's lectures on *The Essentials of Democracy* (Oxford Press).

NOTE 4, p. 85. *Deutsche Ideologie* (L.M., II, p. 10).

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CHAPTER VII

NOTE 1, p. 93. *Deutsche Ideologie* (*L.M.*, II, p. 25).

NOTE 2, p. 94. *Thesen über Feuerbach*, 2nd Thesis (*L.M.*, II, p. 3).

NOTE 3, p. 97. The most striking example of this degradation is Lenin's own book: *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.

NOTE 4, p. 100. *The Crisis and Democracy*, by the Rev. Eric Fenn (S.C.M. Press) (p. 47).

NOTE 5, p. 102. *Deutsche Ideologie* (*L.M.*, II, p. 30).

CHAPTER VIII

NOTE 1, p. 104. *Deutsche Ideologie* (*L.M.*, II, p. 30).

NOTE 2, p. 105. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, II, p. 30).

NOTE 3, p. 105. *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie* (*L.M.*, I, p. 276).

NOTE 4, p. 106. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, I, p. 277).

NOTE 5, p. 106. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, I, p. 269).

NOTE 6, p. 108. Engels, Letter to Joseph Block, September 21st, 1890. Engel's idea seems to have been that the non-economic factors cancel one another out: e.g. he writes in *Ludwig Feuerbach* (Lawrence & Wishart), p. 58: 'Thus the conflict of innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produces a state of affairs entirely analogous to that in the realm of unconscious nature.' 'Entirely analogous' is a queer phrase.

NOTE 7, p. 112. It is self-evident that in the case of a purely economic system, as conceived by Marxism, optimum functioning and maximum functioning are convertible terms. The distinction which in reality exists between them belongs to the ethico-political realm — for Marxism the realm of illusion.

NOTE 8, p. 114. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, I, pp. 272-3).

NOTE 9, p. 115. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, I, p. 280).

NOTE 10, p. 116. *Ibid.* (*L.M.*, I, p. 272).

NOTE 11, p. 117. See Paul Tillich: *The Interpretation of History*, Chap. I.

NOTE 12, p. 123. *Zur Kritik* (*L.M.*, I, p. 274).

NOTE 13, p. 124. *Deutsche Ideologie* (*L.M.*, I, p. 33).

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CHAPTER IX

NOTE 1, p. 132. *Deutsche Ideologie* (*L.M.*, II, p. 31).

NOTE 2, p. 134. Fr. Victor White, in *Blackfriars*, May 1937.

NOTE 3, p. 136. This is perhaps an exaggeration as regards Marx himself. His phrase and his italics are significant: 'the self-evident proof... of the practical energy [of his theory] is the fact that it originates in the decisive *positive* annulment of religion': 'ihr Ausgang von der entschiedenen *positiven* Aufhebung der Religion'. Positive annulment is obviously distinguished from negative annulment: the phrase implies that the religious dynamic remains, though purified of the religious illusion.

NOTE 4, p. 143. No doubt, as I have pointed out, the congregation of the workers by the necessities of capitalist industrial production is the most potent factor in facilitating their political organization. Nor am I denying that the mass-demonstrations of the workers (as in Hyde Park in 1867) are interpreted by the ruling class as a threat of disturbance. But that is beside the point.

NOTE 5, p. 144. This is, of course, a rather superficial use of the term: 'ruling class'. There is a very real sense in which the working class is not the ruling class in contemporary British democracy: see my analysis of the position in *The Price of Leadership*. But sociological analysis of that kind is not possible on Marxist principles: it can be conducted only in the realm of the 'political illusion'. For Marx himself the achievement of complete democracy in a capitalist society was synonymous with the working class becoming the ruling class. For an acute sociological analysis of the British ruling class, see *The Price of Liberty*, by Adolf Loewe (Hogarth Press).

NOTE 6, p. 145. *Soviet Democracy*, by Pat Sloan (Gollancz), p. 239.

NOTE 7, p. 146. That is not to say that a democracy may not prove to have greater powers of endurance even in war: though it is surely untrue to say that the war of 1914-18 demonstrated this. It is highly improbable that Germany would have endured longer had her government been democratic.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER X

NOTE 1, p. 154. On this important matter see the chapters on Marx in my *Heaven — and Earth*: where it is shown that Marx's despair at the non-political character of the German people was a powerful incentive in his discovery of the 'inevitability' of social revolution.

CHAPTER XI

NOTE 1, p. 178. For an insight into the ethos of the democratic working-class movement during the first half of the nineteenth century, see *The Life of a Radical* by Samuel Bamford, and William Lovett's autobiography. Bamford represents the industrial worker of the north — he was a silk-weaver of Middleton in Lancashire; while Lovett, though of Cornish origin, was a London carpenter. The books are curiously different.

CHAPTER XII

NOTE 1, p. 190. 'The Christian faith' needs definition. But the only kind of definition adequate to the purposes of this inquiry would demand a volume. Here I can only say that I mean by it the acceptance of the life, teaching, death, and after-life of Jesus as an authoritative revelation of the nature of reality and of the power that governs it. It is the belief in the revelation of the Absolute in the Person of Jesus Christ — 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life'.

NOTE 2, p. 192. From a review of a recent book by Mr. H. J. Laski in *The Times Literary Supplement*.

CHAPTER XIII

NOTE 1, p. 210. I have considered this problem in greater detail in *The Price of Leadership* (S.C.M. Press). See also Mr. R. H. Tawney's masterly book on *Equality* (Allen & Unwin).

NOTE 2, p. 219. Kautsky insisted that the theory of the 'revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat' was distorted by

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Lenin so as to conceal the fact that Marx intended the phrase only as a formal definition of the situation that would arise in a complete political democracy under capitalism — *the continued existence and functioning of the democracy being assumed*. This is probably true. But Marx remains guilty of the original failure to apprehend that socialism is organically dependent on the fundamental values of democracy.

CHAPTER XIV

NOTE 1, p. 226. The record of my contemporary reaction will be found in various essays published in the *Nation* in 1918-19 and since collected under the title *The Evolution of an Intellectual* (Cape).

NOTE 2, p. 238. 'Understanding': the actual word (*Versöhnung*) happens to be one of the most degraded associations for the Nazi mind. 'A peace of understanding' (*Verständigungsfriede*) was the slogan of the Reichstag majority in 1917. This movement represents, for Herr Hitler, the disease of democracy; and probably the word excites in him a quite peculiar nausea.

CHAPTER XVI

NOTE 1, p. 272. What promises to be the most successful of such communities, the Cotswold Bruderhof, is guided by the deeply Christian teaching of the late Dr. Eberhard Arnold.

NOTE 2, p. 273. Compare the following passage in a letter of Matthew Arnold written to Cardinal Newman in 1871:

Do you not think that what is Tory and anti-democratic in the Church of England (and undoubtedly her Tory, anti-democratic, and even squirearchical character is very marked) is one of her great dangers at the present time; and a danger from which the Catholic Church, with its Gregories and Innocents of whom you speak, is much more exempt? I mean though the Roman Catholic Church may in fact have been anti-democratic in modern times on the Continent, there seems nothing in her nature to make her so; but in the nature of the English Church there does; and is not this an additional peril, at the present day, for the English Church?

NOTE 3, p. 277. *The Price of Leadership*, p. 89.

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CHAPTER XVII

NOTE 1, p. 281. 'More intimate', partly in the emotional sense, because the national Church has been compelled to become much more active — to use Mr. Chamberlain's phrase, it has become 'a go-getter' for souls; but partly by reason of an increase of genuine concern for the social condition of the people. On the other hand, the national Church is less intimately related to society in the objective sociological sense; it is much less an accepted organ of social integration. The parson has lost very much of his social significance; and has become less essential to the working of modern society. He no longer occupies a 'key-position' even in rural society. That has been taken from him largely by the doctor under National Health Insurance.

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